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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that American society persistently separates home from workplace and extends adolescence, most American youth make the school-to-work transition with a minimum of pain and reasonable success. A substantial minority do not, however, and there is need to improve the transition process especially for those who have been economically and culturally deprived. No program to improve the school-to-work transition can expect success unless it makes an allowance for the constraints imposed by the cultural norms, labor market realities, and human development processes that constitute the transition environment. Irresponsibility is a far more serious barrier to successful youth access to the labor market than are inexperience and lack of skill. As job security continues to decline in the United States, increasing numbers of youth are finding themselves among that peripheral group of employees to whom employers are reluctant to make any commitment. The family is the single most important contributor or deterrent to the career success of youth. The discipline of successful school performance is helpful in preparing youth for labor market participation. Vocational education has suffered bad press because it has misconstrued its own best role, which should be career exploration at the secondary level and career preparation at the postsecondary level. Apprenticeship's potential for contributing to the school-to-work transition is very limited in the United States. Like job training, apprenticeship typically serves employers' needs and is most often only available to individuals who have already completed the school-to-work transition. Second-chance programs of employment and training have made a modest contribution to improving youths' school-to-work transition and can be strengthened with some recommended reforms. Strategies to improve and facilitate the youth transition process include work-oriented parent effectiveness training, career education supplemented by experience-based alternative schools and second-chance programs, and a world-of-work curriculum that emphasizes job-keeping and job-doing skills. (MN)

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# Youth Transition From Adolescence to the World of Work

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by
Garth L. Mangum

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**Youth and America's Future:**
**The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship**

# YOUTH AND AMERICA'S FUTURE:
## THE WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION COMMISSION ON WORK, FAMILY AND CITIZENSHIP

When William Thomas Grant established the Grant Foundation in 1936, he sought a better understanding of the ways in which individuals adapt to the vicissitudes of life. Touched in his professional life by the importance of good human relationships, Mr. Grant wished to "help children develop what is in them" so they would better "enjoy all the good things the world has to offer them."

Fifty years later, recognizing the special needs of older adolescents in our changing society, the Foundation's Trustees established **Youth and America's Future** with much the same purpose; its charge is to evaluate current knowledge, stimulate new ideas, increase communication among researchers, practitioners and policymakers, and, thus, to help our nation chart a better future for youth.

The Foundation's President, Robert J. Haggerty, M.D., has described the Commission's unique perspective:

*"Against a rising chorus of legitimate concern about the many problems facing today's youth, the Foundation has initiated this Commission on Youth and America's Future to speak in a different voice. It will explore the strengths of America's young men and women, their famlilies and the programs and community institutions that serve them. We adopt this approach not to diminish the importance of the problems that exist, but to learn the lessons of success. The Foundation is confident that this effort to look with renewed respect at youth, where it strides as well as where it stumbles, will help forge the links of understanding and mutual responsibility that make our democracy strong."*

The publications in this series have been prepared to inform the Commission and to stimulate its thinking. While the Commission does not necessarily endorse the various findings presented, it does encourage their thoughtful consideration in the interests of American youth.


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# YOUTH TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO THE WORLD OF WORK

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Garth L. Mangum

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# YOUTH TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO THE WORLD OF WORK

Garth L. Mangum

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The transition from adolescence into the adult world of work is inherently difficult in a society which persistently separates home and workplace and extends adolescence. Nevertheless, most American youth make the transition with a minimum of pain and reasonable success. Yet there is a substantial minority, primarily from culturally and economically deprived backgrounds, who are permanently scarred by their unsuccessful experiences. The transition process can be improved for all but the latter deserves the priority.

2. There are cultural norms, labor market realities and human development processes which compose the transition environment. No program to improve a transition can expect success which does not take into account these constraints. Employers control and dispense jobs and any successful program must ultimately help youth to meet employer expectations.

3. Irresponsibility is a far more serious barrier to successful youth access to the labor market than inexperience and lack of skill. No more than one-third of U.S. jobs require pre-entry training and most job skills are learned on the job. Thus, job-getting and job-keeping skills are more critical to youth attractiveness as employees than are job-doing skills.

4. Job security is declining in the United States. Employers increasingly seek to carefully select and invest in a core group of employees who they seek to retain while avoiding commitment to a peripheral group who they prefer to employ only temporarily. Youth are typically in the peripheral category.

5. The family is the single most important contributor or deterrent to the career success of youth. It is possible to increase parent effectiveness in aiding their children's careers. But it is less likely to happen in those families doing the greatest harm.

6. The discipline of successful school performance is helpful in preparing for labor market participation. A career education concept which could have made a major contribution to career success has been rejected. Still, there are less draconic measures which could be taken to enhance the schools' contributions. Among the desirable curriculum additions would be values clarification, assertiveness training, decision-making skills and familiarization with labor market dynamics.

7. Vocational education has suffered bad press because it has misconstrued its own best role. At the secondary level that is career exploration with career preparation pushed primarily to the post-secondary level.

8. Apprenticeship's potential for contributing to the transition is very limited in the United States. It and on-the-job training serve primarily employer needs and, in essence, the transition out of adolescence must be made before training access is attained.

9. Second chance programs of employment and training have made a modest contribution which can be strengthened with some recommended reforms. Some major advances are being made in alternative high schools with employer involvement. Local initiative is among their irreplaceable strengths.

10. What is needed more than research to develop additional knowledge of the youth transition process is application of the knowledge we already have. The essence of that knowledge is to work within the bounds of reality set by labor market dynamics and career development theory. The critical question to be asked is whether it is possible to synthesize for the unsuccessful minority the practices and conditions of the successful majority.

11. It is possible to dream of an effort concentrated in the central cities on the now least successful, beginning with world of work oriented parent effectiveness training, carrying on through career education supplemented by experience-based alternative schools and second chance programs, buttressed with a world of work curriculum emphasizing job-getting and job-keeping as well as job-doing skills, supported by employers offering part-time and summer work experience and guaranteed placement to successful completers who are consistent performers. It is only a dream, but not an impossible one.

# YOUTH TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO THE WORLD OF WORK

Garth L. Mangum

Youth unemployment--and related issues--has been a staple of labor market policy throughout the quarter century over which the American society has given serious attention to improving its labor market performance. But such persistence can cut both ways. It can be perceived as such an economic waste and social tragedy that eradicating or ameliorating it should have high priority--social dynamite as it was being characterized in the early 1960s--or as so inherent in society as to be accepted as the necessary cost of other social gains.

It is probably wise to recognize it as both but for two different sets of people. The transition is inherent in a society which has separated home and workplace and has persistently lengthened adolescence and delayed the acceptance of adulthood. With the world beyond the home increasingly complex, a period of exploration and experimentation is essential to wise career decisions. Most make the transition with little pain and no deprivation. It is not even obvious that delay in assuming a productive role entails any net loss for society. There may be social as well as personal gain in improving the results of the exploration and experimentation toward more productive and more rewarding careers, but that priority is not high. For others the transition is not only painful and accompanied by deprivation but leaves them permanently scarred. For that group, it is high priority to both reduce the social and personal cost and

improve the outcomes of the transition. Who falls into each group is no great mystery.

This paper describes the transition process and the institutions through which it is channeled, identifies the routes to success and failure and offers recommendations for policy improvement and further research.

## Measures of Difficulty in the Transition

Unemployment among youth is the most commonly used evidence of difficulty experienced in the transition from the usually sheltered atmosphere of the home and the controlled environment of school to the competitive buffetings of the labor market. It is not the best indicator, but it is worth reviewing along with the more meaningful indicators of the employment/population ratio and out-of-school, out-of-work status. Both the incidence and intensity of these measures should be explored for perspective as well as racial and international comparisons.

### Incidence and Intensity of Unemployment

A major factor in the high youth unemployment over the past quarter century has been the high numbers and proportion of youth resulting from the post-World War II baby boom. As the youth proportions have declined, some--but not all--of the indicators have trended downward. Many of the relevant detailed data have not been reported since 1982, a timing distorted by the 1981-82 recession but there is sufficient information to trace the trends.

One-half of all unemployment in the late 1970s was accounted for by those under 25 years of age. By the early 1980s that figure was 40 percent. At the peak of the youth labor force entrance phenomenon in the late 1960s, teenage unemployment rates were 5.5 as high as those of adults 25 years of age and older. That was up from 2.8 times at the beginning of

the 1960s. Since the mid-1970s the ratio has been a little more than triple but appears to still be trending slowly downward. Throughout the period, unemployment rates of black teenagers have been approximately 2.4 times the rates of whites of the same age, resulting in one-half of black teenagers being unemployed as the 1981-82 recession drew to a close. Teenage unemployment rates in metropolitan poverty areas was double that in nonpoverty areas. For black teens in those metropolitan poverty areas, their unemployment rates were 2.4 times the unemployment rates of all teens in nonpoverty areas.

Of course, unemployment measures only those out of work and actively seeking a job. But many teenagers are neither working nor seeking work, though their labor force participation rate has trended persistently upward from a low of 44.5 percent in 1964 to 54.1 percent in 1982. But the black-white comparison is most startling. In 1982, 57.5 percent of white teenagers either had a job or were actively seeking one. That was true of only 36.6 percent of black teenagers. Drawing those trends together, 46 out of every 100 white teenagers had a job in 1982. That was true of only 19 out of every 100 black teenagers, even lower if data was available on poverty areas.

More than 60 percent of all unemployed black teenagers reside in central cities with half of this group concentrated in poverty areas. For these and other youths, there is a high correlation between their unemployment and their propensity to commit crimes.

These are some of the hard facts of youth unemployment. However, one can choose another set of statistics to minimize the problem. Less than one out of five of the unemployed is a teenager and only 3 percent are black teenagers. Half of unemployed teenagers are students. More than

one-third of all unemployed teenagers are interested in part-time jobs. Less than one-tenth of teenagers and two-fifths of young adults are married with a spouse present. Most unemployed teenagers and a substantial proportion of young adults live with their parents. Over two-thirds of families with unemployment have at least one person employed, a factor especially true of the teen-aged unemployed. Only one-third of unemployed youth are from poor families. Most spells of teenage unemployment are short and most teenagers have little difficulty finding jobs. Every year the number of employed teenagers doubles between May and July, a remarkable labor market performance. Just turning 20 years of age cuts the unemployment rate by one-third and arriving at 25 drops it to two-fifths of what it is for teenagers. The bulk of youth unemployment is experienced by a relatively small group of school-dropout teenagers with long spells of unemployment. But it is the quarter million who are not in school, not employed and not looking for work who are potentially of the greatest concern. But that really isn't very many people.

Since it is clear that the number of inexperienced youth the labor market has had to absorb has been a major factor in the level of youth unemployment, the number of teenagers in the population in the future is a key factor in projecting what will happen to youth unemployment rates. The fact that the number of teenagers in the population is slated to drop by 5 million during the 1980s would suggest a sharp decline, though the number of black teens is slated to stay constant, theirs rising as a proportion of the total. Other factors in the rise of youth unemployment may have been the competition represented by the rising labor force participation rate for women and the influx of foreign workers, legal and illegal. That competition can be expected to continue. About 70 percent of all

unemployed teenagers are new entrants or reentrants to the labor force and approximately 45 percent have never worked in paid employment. This suggests that youth unemployment will persist as some substantial multiple of the adult rate.

International Perspectives

A useful perspective can also be found by viewing international trends in youth unemployment. Until 1973, youth employment could be considered a uniquely American problem. Of the industrial countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only underdeveloped Italy and our sister North American nation, Canada, came near to matching U.S. youth unemployment rates. There had been no immediate postwar baby boom in those nations which had suffered direct devastation during World War II. The tendency in most had been for youth to leave school early and go directly into a lockstep apprentice program.

The school to work transition had not been entirely painless. Youth unemployment was still some multiple of adult rates. But in most of Western Europe, economic growth had been rapid. Adults as well as youth had been in short supply relative to demand. With overall unemployment rates often under 1 percent as in West Germany and Sweden, a multiple of the adult rate still didn't amount to much.

But by the late 1960s, four or five years later than in the United States, a mini-baby boom began having some affects on the rate of new entrants to the labor market. More importantly, the expectations of European youth were changing rapidly. They were less willing to accept the lockstep patterns of the past and began modeling their lifestyles after what they perceived that of U.S. youth to be. The youth riots in France in the late 1960s and again in 1986 are an example.

But that proved to be only the beginning. The quadrupling of OPEC oil prices was much more devastating to other OECD members than to U.S. and Canada. The latter two still produced the majority of their own petroleum needs, the others practically none. Resulting inflationary pressures forced every OECD country to run its economy with considerable slack. And in Europe, there were few minorities and women to share the buffer position with youth. There were only the foreign "guest workers" to send home as a buffer before rising unemployment took its tool among youth. At present Italy, the United Kingdom and Canada all have youth unemployment rates approximately equal to those of the United States. France is not far behind, while West Germany--while substantially lower than the rest--has youth unemployment more than five times its 1970 rate. Only Japan of major industrial democracies has been spared a substantial relative rise in youth unemployment.

Despite differences in the economic and social perspective, it is clear that the same phenomena essentially operate throughout the world as in the United States. Youth are in an exploratory mood. They are no more ready to settle down abroad than in the United States. Their unemployment does not tend to be long term. Those abroad tend to delay family responsibilities even longer than we. They are largely excused the race and sex differentials because of the lack of minorities and the limited labor force participation for women. Inevitably there will be considerable thrashing about at the entry to the labor market. Perhaps the added height of youth unemployment in the U.S. can be explained primarily by the interracial and inter-sex competition arising on the U.S. scene.

## The Outlook

Noting the sharp decline in the number and proportion of youth in the population, there have been persistent forecasts of a decline in youth unemployment. It has not happened, at least as a multiple of adult unemployment, but has stayed fairly constant since the mid-70s. The probable reasons are a combination of the persistent high unemployment rates, with inexperienced youth left out in slack labor markets, and the growing competition for the same jobs from women and immigrants. The U.S. Department of Labor is once again forecasting labor shortages by the turn of the century, but, with the exceptions of the second world war, that would be a new experience for the U.S. economy. The economy appears to be bifurcating with most rapid growth of professional and technical jobs which have credentialing requirements not obtained before young adulthood and low-level jobs which youth can readily perform but for which they will have to compete with other new entrants. Adult women are gradually upgrading themselves but the flow of immigrants is unlikely to be stemmed despite the recent legislation. Hence continuance of youth unemployment at 2.5 to 3 times adult unemployment, accompanied by commensurate employment population ratios, seems to be the most reasonable forecast.

## Youth Labor Market Realities

The transition in question is from the home and school to the labor market. Whatever the realities of the former, they are markedly different from the latter. It is useful to track that transition in general terms with special attention to the ghetto youth environment, then focus on the demand and supply aspects of the youth labor market.

The School to Work Transition

At age 14 and 15 almost every young person is in school, neither seeking nor holding a job even in summer, except for traditional activities such as newspaper delivery, baby-sitting, and neighborhood lawn cutting. Less than one-third look for work during these years. Job holding begins to increase at 16 and 17 among both students and the few who will drop out of school at this age. One-half work or look for work during the school year and three-fifths during the summer. Generally, these youth are not thinking in career terms but only looking for a source of spending money.

At age 18 and 19, most leave high school, either to enter the labor market or to continue into post-secondary education. One out of three will have completed their formal education. Of the rest about one-half (comprising 20 percent of the total population cohort) will ultimately graduate from four or more years of college. The rest will complete shorter programs or drop out without a post-secondary credential. Those 18- and 19-year-olds who continue in school will be primarily concerned with income and will rarely view the jobs they take as steps in a longer-term career plan. Those who do not plan on continued education will usually begin serious exploration of the job market, moving among various jobs in search of something they are willing to stay with. At this stage three-fourths of males and three-fifths of females either hold or search for jobs. A particularly devastating factor for the young women is that one out of ten 16- to 19-year-olds has borne a child.

By the early twenties, most young people are employed and self-supporting. Less than 30 percent are out of the labor force, about one-half of those still in school and the rest keeping house. Most have chosen or settled into an occupational area, though many have yet to find

the job they will stay with. Family responsibilities rather than occupational preference may have been the stabilizing factor for some. Of the young adult group, 41 percent of the Hispanic males and 27 percent of the black males have become family heads. This is also true of 20 percent of the black females but only 4 percent of the white females.

Involved in the shift from the search for spending money to career exploration and settling in is a transition from part-time to full-time jobs. Only one-seventh of 16- and 17-year-old workers hold full-time jobs compared to three-fifths of employed 18- and 19-year-olds and four-fifths of workers 20-24 years of age. Conversely, one-half of the employable 16- and 17-year-olds hold part-time jobs for less than one-half of the year compared to one-fourth of the 18- and 19-year-olds and one-tenth of the young adults.

The occupational and industrial pattern of youth employment follows this transition process. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds are concentrated in sales, service and laborer occupations. Young adults are more likely to be clerical, professional or technical workers. A shift occurs from wholesale and retail to manufacturing and services. Mean hourly wages rise with age.

The labor market knowledge of the early teens tends to be limited to neighborhood odd jobs and the activities of adult role models. Career goals are vague, bounded by limited experience and observation, and frequently unrealistic. Through trial and error, increased networks of working friends and relatives and through the broadening effects of education, most youth learn something about how to search for, find and hold a job. A few catch an early vision of what they want to do with their lives but most do not do so into their twenties. Often before they know what they will want to do, most begin to stabilize their work patterns

until they demonstrate sufficient dependability for employers to be willing to invest in formal and informal on-the-job training. Most emerge from high school with the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and computing so essential to modern job markets. Little occupational training is received in high school except such broadly adaptable skills as typing and the industrial arts. Beyond high school, a minority find specific occupational training in post-secondary education and the military but most depend upon on-the-job learning and experience. But by the early twenties most have an occupation they can call their own.

Employer perceptions of youths follow this same pattern, generally realistically. Young teenagers are considered unstable, untested and undependable. Their productivity is in doubt, their tenure likely to be short and their ability unknown. A good school record is reassurance but generally an employer will trust such youths only with rudimentary jobs requiring no formal or informal training unless they are personally known and have some kinship or friendship tie. By the late teens and early twenties, there will be enough evidence of stability growing out of school performance and early varied work experience for the employer to risk investment in the youth. With plentiful supplies of youths such as has been the case in recent years, and with the additional competitive factor of working women and immigrants, employers could and did increase the age of acceptable career entry.

Thus both youth development and labor market demand parallel, intersect and adapt. The youth's perceptions and intentions shift. The young person builds a pool of experience, credentials and contacts. Each job tends to become more substantial and to provide greater exposure to other options. With a "track record" employers are more willing to hire

and invest in on-the-job training. The young adult then moves from the external labor market into the internal labor market to progress within an establishment or into a career pathway consisting of a series of jobs with various employers.

None of this is orderly. It is haphazard. The early jobs rarely have any connection with the later ones. There are many pitfalls, detours, dead ends and points of discontinuity in this progression. Some of these discontinuities are positive. Leaving school with a credential to return after experience, more preparation, departure from the nuclear family, marriage, passing through the secondary to the primary labor market, the transition from part-time to full-time work and from youth to adult jobs are all necessary parts of the rites of passage. Most youngsters successfully negotiate these hurdles and find their way into a reasonably satisfactory working career.

Other discontinuities are negative: early school-leaving, early child-bearing, drug or alcohol addiction, arrest and incarceration. These strike individuals but they tend to be concentrated among certain socioeconomic groups: those from culturally and economically deprived backgrounds, minorities confronted by limited opportunities during critical developmental years, young women socialized into sex stereotypes, those with physical and mental handicaps. Certain geographical areas, rural and urban, impose their own barriers. Those who start from disadvantaged backgrounds generally face the greatest obstacles all along the path. They have less exposure to opportunity and more to negative events. Parental and peer influences are less positive and there is less institutional support.

The statistical evidence of the scarring effects of youth unemployment are clear. For most, unemployment during youth is an incidental experience. It may even have positive effects if it leads to greater exploration and recognition of realities and requirements. But those who experience the most unemployment as youth continue to do so as adults. If their very sense of self-worth is damaged they may withdraw into failure or build their self-image in less socially desirable ways.

Thus, though youth unemployment overall is a slowly declining problem, the career entry process is sufficiently fraught with difficulty and danger to require sustained attention.

Ghetto Youth Unemployment

The inner cores of the nation's largest central cities post a special labor market problem for those growing up there. A combination of deteriorating economies, perverse population trends and disfunctional lifestyles compound the standard difficulties of maturation and career entry. Every major city in the United States has experienced in the past 35 years a massive outflow of jobs in manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade--the industries traditionally supplying most of the entry jobs for those without advanced credentials. Only finance, insurance and real estate showed consistent growth in the first half of the 1970s in the central cities of metropolitan areas of one million or more. And these were primarily white-collar jobs requiring substantial education. Among occupational categories, only managers and administrators grew in those metropolitan areas during the same time period.

At the same time that jobs were fleeing the central cities, so were the populations. But for the most part, the leavers were the successful and the stayers were the unsuccessful. For example, in 1982-83, some 5

million people moved out of U.S. central cities while 2.7 million moved in. But eight out of ten outmigrants were white as were over two-thirds of the in-migrants. During that same period, the net outflow of blacks was only 122,000 out of the 12 million living in central cities. In the 1970s, 47 percent of blacks lived in central cities; 60 percent did so in 1980. Adding the growing concentration of Hispanics gave the central cities a minority ratio of 34.3 percent in 1982, 23.7 percent black and 10.6 percent Hispanic. Nevertheless, the 13 percent increase of black population during the 1970s was a sharp drop from the 32 percent increase during the 1960s. Black, white or Hispanic, whoever became successful left the central cities. The black population outside of the central cities grew by 43 percent during the 1970s.

Tending to concentrate in the central cities were those families of least financial success and those most prone to various forms of social disorganization. It is in the family circle that most children and youth receive the acculturation that more than anything else determines their ultimate success or failure in the labor market. Family influence is probably still more positive than negative in the central city, but, since the incidence of failing parents is greater, the home environment is less likely to overcome the negative aspect of the external environment. In the nation as a whole one family in six is headed by a women. One child out of two spends part of his or her life in a single-parent family. The former approaches one-half and the latter near universality in the central city.

Not only do central city youth tend to come from the less successful populations and be surrounded by the least favorable employment opportunities, those life styles necessary for survival tend to be least attractive to employers. This is not to say that these youth are unsuccessful. They tend to do a remarkable job of adapting to the

circumstances and surviving and even excelling in terms of their environment. But each youth wants peer acceptance and respect; all want a sense of self-worth. But all too often those are available only in terms of language, grooming and conduct which are unacceptable to most employers.

Research has not yet clarified whether employers are more likely to avoid hiring the youth or whether the youth in those settings are more likely to reject the kinds of jobs available to them. Despite the outflow of jobs as well as people, it is not clear whether or not there are enough jobs fillable by youth without extensive formal preparation if it were not for competition from central city and commuting adults. It is known that many youths become involved in and even relatively successful in the irregular or subterranean economy. They find alternative income sources from income maintenance programs and illicit activities. But how many are able to earn from these activities the equivalent of the income available from employment is another unknown. Central city youth appear to be reacting rationally to their environment. The critical issue is whether the environment can be improved, the youth be removed from the environment or the youth be prepared to surmount the environment in socially acceptable ways.

The Demand for Youth Labor

One cannot understand the youth labor market without some knowledge of labor markets in general. This is no place for an extensive treatise but a few concepts are essential. A labor market is not a place but a theoretical concept encompassing all of the ways in which employers and potential employees contact each other, information flows between them and transactions such as hiring, firing, promotion, transfer, etc. occur.

Labor markets have geographic, industrial and occupational dimensions. The geographic dimension is bounded by the distance the employer might send a message of job availability with reasonable prospect of a job seeker response. More often than not, youth function in a local labor market because they are more attached to their homes and families than they are to their occupations and because potential employers do not find them sufficiently valuable to compensate them for moving expenses.

Every industry has its peculiarities which reflect product market factors as well as labor market conditions. In fact, the demand for labor is derived from the product which labor is involved in producing such that the labor market in many ways is the mirror image of the product market. Every occupation also has its peculiarities. Some occupations are industry-specific and, occurring in only one industry, reflect that industry's forces and conditions. Others are firm-specific, occurring only in one establishment, though those would usually be characterized as jobs rather than occupations. The remainder are generic. That is, they occur in many industries and will share the peculiarities of both industry and occupation.

There are also external and internal labor markets. The former is the world external to the employing establishment where information flows in pursuit of hiring transitions. Once hired, the employee moves through a port of entry at some point in a hierarchial job structure and enters the internal labor market where on-the-job training occurs and such decisions as promotion, transfer, compensation and discharge are made.

Though internal labor markets are characterizable in many ways, it is useful for youth labor market analysis to think of primary and secondary labor markets. The former are employment situations characterized by

interesting and well-paid jobs providing on-the-job training, advancement possibilities, job security and fringe benefits. Secondary labor markets are the opposite. Youth generally obtain their early work experience in the secondary labor market and, if they are fortunate, progress to a primary labor market position. Others, because of inadequate preparation or performance or because of discrimination, may become trapped in the secondary labor market.

Youthful labor market entrants also confront the concept of shelters and screens. Incumbents of primary labor market jobs seek to shelter them from competition by putting a gate before each port of entry and controlling the gatekeeper. Examples are licensure, academic credentials, apprenticeship, membership in unions and professionals associations and civil service merit systems. Employers want to maximize the pool of applicants but then screen out those who might prove troublesome or unproductive. Recruitment and selections systems are typically designed to identify low-risk employees rather than select the absolute best. Youthful entrants, to be successful, must be able to negotiate this maze by avoiding the shelters and piercing the screen.

It would be a rare employer who hired youth simply out of preference for youth, all other things being equal. The exception would be for youth as employees of enterprises catering to youth. More often, employers hire youth either because they are more readily available or will work for less or accept conditions rejected by adults. Few are the jobs that youth are simply better at than adults. Youth of the present day also tend to be better educated on the average than the current adults were at the same age. The continuing complaint that employers register against youth is their instability. Complaints about their productivity while working are

relatively few. It is that they are not ready to settle down and stay with a job that disturbs employers. Hence, they tend to restrict youth to jobs where the training requirements are minor, where turnover is not costly and often where the job itself is part-time or too unstable to be attractive to an adult who has any alternative.

Hence, those who would aid the transition will assist youth to accommodate to that labor market. Any job is better than none to a youth with no work experience. Youth should be encouraged to take what is available but to be constantly alert to opportunities to change, gain other experiences and move from the secondary to the primary labor market. In the process, the youth will be encouraged to work steadily and productively, gaining a reputation and a source for possible references to allay the concerns of future recruiters.

The counselor of youth will be alert to those employers who invest in their employees through on-the-job training. Job development efforts should be addressed to getting those youth who demonstrate stability through a port of entry into a structured and sheltered internal labor market where they have the opportunities for permanence and advancement. On the other hand, the counselor will be alert to the threat to future job development from referring a youth who is likely only to reinforce the employer's fears.

Secondary labor market employers make no lasting commitments to their employees and, hence, generally are not very selective. On the other hand, those employers who normally intend to establish a lasting relationship, perhaps after some probationary period, are likely to be more selective requiring greater job seeking skill on the part of youth to successfully pass the screening devices.

A study I coauthored of employers of youth in five central city labor markets found that over 75 percent of such firms required job applicants to fill out application forms. All indicated that inability to fill out a form correctly would be a deterrent to being hired. These employers also reported that only about 40 percent of their youthful applicants did, in fact, have difficulty filling out the required forms.

In addition, 22 percent of the firms in that study administered some sort of standardized test of their applicants. Most were basic competence tests involving math, cognitive reasoning, typing, finger dexterity and mechanical and psychomotor traits. Some employers also gave polygraph tests for honesty. About one-third of youthful applicants were reported to have failed the competency tests, about double the failure rate of adults.

Even though this study concentrated on employers in five large central cities--New York City, Cleveland, Louisville, Houston and Denver--few registered any general reluctance to hire youth. Of those employers who, though in industries which traditionally hire many youth, had none on their payrolls at the time of interview, only one-fourth expressed a preference for adults. About 70 percent of those without youth had received applications from youth but had no openings or none at the entry level. Most blamed their small size and commitments to relatives and current employees as the reason for not hiring youth.

In reporting what factors were important and unimportant in the search for and selection of youthful employees, cosmetic factors such as appearance, dress, speech and mannerisms were cited as most important with dependability factors second. Physical strength, school attended, high school completion and technical training had little relevance as selection factors. Educational performance (as compared to credentials, previous

work experience and references) were of moderate importance. Yet when querying experience with youth as contrasted with factors in selecting them, the cosmetic factors turned out to be of little importance. There was little complaint concerning job performance. The youth could do the jobs they were being offered. Overwhelmingly, the propensity to quit was cited as the most serious problem in hiring youth, followed by other dependability factors such as tardiness and absenteeism.

Nevertheless, those same employers seemed willing to invest modestly in on-the-job training of youth. One-half of the employers who had youth on their payrolls at the time of the survey reported providing an average of three weeks of informal on-the-job training to them.

Among the reasons for hiring youth were their willingness to work for relatively low pay and at hours and part-time schedules unattractive to adults. Ninety percent of the employers surveyed reported that they would not increase their employment of youth if a youth minimum lower than the adult minimum wage existed (many were already paying less than the federal minimum). Nevertheless, the federal minimum was the standard wage rate paid and few had ever had such a wage offer rejected by youth. Given their limited income needs, youth were the most willing to work the part-time schedules attractive to employers in many service industries. Hence, if adult women and, often, other adults such as immigrants, were available and willing to accept the jobs, they tended to be chosen for their stability. But there was little objection to youth per se.

## Employer Expectations

A critical reality which must be accepted by all who would achieve economic independence in an industrial society is that employers, private or public, control the jobs which comprise the primary source of income of

nearly all citizens. Public policy establishes some regulatory boundaries within which hiring decisions are made, such as equal employment opportunity and minimum wage requirements. Labor-management agreements may differentiate among individuals concerning relative property rights in jobs. As noted, various devices may have been designed by incumbent employee groups to shelter their jobs against outside competition. But within those constraints, the employer ultimately decides whether and whom to hire. Whoever would obtain a job must meet at least the employer's minimum hiring standards. The employer, not the employee nor the public policy determines who is and who is not employable.

Those facts raise into sharp relief the requisites of employability. Just what is it which makes one jobseeker attractive to an employer and causes others to be rejected? What is it that causes a group with some common characteristics to suffer more than their proportionate share of the rejection? What can be done to provide to individuals within those groups the qualities which have made others generally acceptable to the same employers?

Worker Maturity

To understand what employers expect of their employees, aside from the skill to perform a specific job task, James N. Johnson of the Far West Education Laboratories, reviewed relevant literature, including reports of interviews with thousands of employers. He found employers of youth complaining of:

- absenteeism and tardiness
- lack of interest in their jobs
- proneness to make costly mistakes
- tendency to ignore instructions
- unwillingness to learn

These employers felt that the major areas in which youth needed improvement in their preparation for work were:

- concern for productivity
- pride in quality of work
- dependability
- follow-through on assignments
- work habits
- attitudes toward company and employers
- ability to write and speak effectively
- ability to follow instructions
- ability to read and apply printed matters to the job
- ambition/motivation

Significantly, few of these employers identified specific job skills as either a problem or a priority need. Those facts raise into sharp relief the requisites of employability. Just what is it which makes one jobseeker attractive to an employer and causes others to be rejected? What is it that causes a group with some common characteristics to suffer more than their proportionate share of the rejection? What can be done to provide to individuals within those groups the qualities which have made others generally acceptable to the same employers?

In my 1980-81 interviews with approximately 2,500 central city employers in five major cities concerning their experiences with youthful employees, the qualities those employers considered important and unimportant in their selection of hiring of youth turned out to be:

Very Important:

appearance and dress

language and speech

references

Somewhat Important:

educational record

previous work experience

Not Important:

physical strength

technical training

high school diploma

When they were asked what problems they experienced with youthful employees, however, their list was quite different. The employers had not found appearance and speech to be problems. Nor were the ability and willingness to fill job assignments, to work hard and to learn new skills. Such stereotypical issues as drugs and theft were hardly mentioned. The overwhelmingly strongest complaints were of youths' unrealiability in showing up for work and their proneness to quit.

When compared with adult employees, immaturity, unreliability and lack of motivation were cited as deficiencies of youth. In effect, the employers seemed to be saying, the major problem with kids is that they behave like kids.

From his examination of the literature and employer surveys, Johnson derived the concept of work maturity, understood as the willingness and ability to accommodate workplace expectations in four categories:

1. Rules and Authority
   - accommodate rules and norms of conduct
     (attendance, punctuality, appropriate personal appearance, etc.)
   - deal effectively with supervision
     (accept and profit from constructive criticism, take and follow directions, acknowledge legitimate authority)

2. Good Work

   - meet standards of quality, accuracy, completeness
   - exert required or necessary effort
   - take appropriate initiative
   - work with minimum of supervision
     (demonstrate ability to be trusted with time, tasks, materials, information)

3. Cooperation and Conflict

   - function cooperatively with fellow workers
     (doing one's share, willingness to help, behaving with reasonable tact and courtesy)
   - handle conflict or grievance constructively

4. Adaptability and Learning

   - accommodate change and shifts in tasks, assignments, settings; adjust to differences in people
   - learn on the job (listen, ask questions, determine what needs to be learned, find means of learning it)

Research into the "psychological dimensions of work," prompted Regis Walther of George Washington University (1976) to identify ten categories of generic skills essential to performing any type of work:

- self-management
- abstract thinking ability
- effective problem solving
- frame of reference flexibility
- ability to reconcile conflicting demands
- ability to reconcile conflicting interest

- adaptiveness to authority
- control of aggression
- ability to process information
- interpersonal skills

Accommodating to Employer Expectations

Finding out what employers want merely poses the problem, it does not solve it. Youth are, by definition, immature and obvious conflicts arise between the lifestyles and objectives of most youth and the expectations of employers. For disadvantaged youth, the discrepancies may be even wider. From interviews with both youth and employers, Paul Osterman--in his Getting Started: The Youth Labor Market--concluded that 16- and 17-year-old labor market participants were in a moratorium stage as "target workers." That is, they were working to achieve a particular consumption target such as purchase of an automobile or a motorcycle. They were not concerned with job quality because they viewed employment as a temporary means to an end, quitting as soon as the target was achieved. Older teenagers and young adults were in an exploratory stage, sampling occupations and jobs before settling down into something more or less permanent.

These objectives are legitimate for youth. To be realistic and practical, the job seeker must recognize and accommodate to the fact that, in general, the employer owns and makes discretionary disposition of the job. But to be equally realistic and practical, labor market practitioners who would aid the youthful job seeker must recognize that it is the youth's life which is also his or hers to dispose. The conflicting loyalties, objectives and values of the youth must be given equal consideration with

those of the employer in order to design a program to accommodate the two sets of motivations. One need not get immersed in the current debate concerning the status of the traditional "work ethic" and the emergence of new work values to recognize inherent conflicts between employer expectations and some of the lifestyle preferences of youth.

The growth toward adulthood is a pursuit of autonomy. The youth who is trying to shed the institutional constraints of the home and the school is unlikely to be enthusiastic about submitting to the constraints of the workplace. Self-control and self-discipline are aspects of maturity toward which the youth may be moving but not likely with eagerness. It requires long time horizons to perceive in the entry level jobs available to most youth a pathway to pain avoidance and self-expression. Shorter and more easily perceived horizons are likely to lead to behavior patterns not especially attractive to employers. The public policy has limited choices: (1) let the youths follow their own predilections which limit their employability, (2) persuade them against those predilections to accommodate to employers requirements or (3) assure that they are aware of the choices and their consequences, then leave them to, or assist them to, facilitate whatever choice they choose to make. The first choice is costly in personal and social terms. The others are no more substantial as interventions than many others already made in private lives but less is known about what does and does not work.

Other Labor Market Barriers

Though not deliberately designed to thwart successful labor market participation of youth, there are a number of other employer practices which often have that effect for some youth but not for others.

Providing permanent employment is an increasingly expensive proposition, what with the growth in nonwage benefits, increasing employee protection legislation and the erosion of common law employer defenses such as the employment at will concept. In response employers increasingly seek to carefully select, train and seek to retain as restricted as possible core group of employees while deliberately avoiding commitment to and even preferring high turnover among a peripheral work force. A range of employment practices such as part-time employment, informal and formal intermittent employees and limited duration hires facilitate this employer preference as does a range of new labor market institutions such as temporary help services and worker leasing firms. Youth are seldom welcomed into the core because of their proclivities for instability but are often preferred at the periphery for the same reasons. Still, the periphery provides opportunity for work experience, development of a reputation and insight into traversing the shelters and screens.

The concept of primary and secondary labor markets is relevant to this growing practice. As noted, in dual labor market theory, primary labor market jobs are those providing good pay and benefits, training, job security and promotion opportunities with the secondary labor market jobs as the mirror image. The core/periphery practice brings the dual labor market of primary and secondary jobs inside the single firm. Youth generally find themselves in the secondary range of this dual labor market, both externally and internally until they demonstrate work maturity through the aging process.

Recruitment and Job Search

Since employers are careful about those in whom they invest, they typically follow recruiting practices designed to reduce their risks. As

new jobs become available, they first seek inside for familiar workers or those on layoff to whom they have moral and perhaps contractual responsibility. When the need exceeds those available inside through transfer, promotion or retraining, most employers turn next to those who have taken the initiative to put in an application for employment previously or who may just happen to apply at the time the need emerges. This recruitment method is costless to the employer and at least demonstrates the ambitions of the job hunter. However, this method is unlikely to be used for jobs requiring high skill or responsibility unless followed up by contact with references to assure competence and stability.

The next most frequent source for recruitment is to spread the word through friends, relatives and current employees. This recruitment method is also low cost but its greatest advantage is the information available about potential employees. The employer likely knows the strengths and weaknesses of his own friends and relatives. Incumbent employees are unlikely to recommend some friend or relative who will be inadequate and for whom they will have to take the blame.

There is a band of jobs for which recruitment is done institutionally through union hiring halls, college placement offices, government civil service selection processes, professional associations and the like or which restrict access to those with certain licenses, credentials or affiliations. Only after exhausting these four sources will most employers look for help to those labor market intermediaries available to the public at large. Newspaper want ads are a low cost source but there is no way of prescreening the applicants. Therefore, employers tend to use them either for low level jobs for which no screening is necessary or to generate a pool of applicants from among which to select. Private employment

agencies charge a fee, from the applicant for low level jobs and from the employer for higher level ones. However, employers turn to private employment agencies less often than the data indicate. More often, the agency acts as a broker for the applicant, contacting the employer to "sell" a particularly attractive applicant or to offer a continuing pool of less attractive ones. The public employment service tends to be a less aggressive intermediary. The employer's initiative is necessary and tends to be generally limited to hard to fill jobs, either because the skill is scarce or the work is unattractive. The wise labor market participant learns how to either gain access further up the recruitment hierarchy or obtain preferential treatment from the publically available intermediaries. Since youth are frequent job seekers, their relative success will be conditioned by their knowledge of and access to these avenues of employer recruitment. Those youth not fortunate enough to be linked into the preferred networks are left with access only to the least desirable jobs.

At the same time employers are attempting to screen out the most risky employees, incumbent employees are seeking to shelter their jobs from competition--the more desirable the job, the stronger the shelter. Licensure, academic credentials and union and employee association membership are among these shelters, all of which are difficult for youth to invade unless invited in by adults on the inside.

Once inside, employers with the most desirable jobs typically operate structured internal labor markets involving careful selection accompanied by often expensive on-the-job training. Until assured of stability, there is reluctance to include and invest in youth. An added complication of recent years is the destruction of job security leading to displacement from those sheltered job environments. Even a youth knowledgeable enough

to seek and influential enough to obtain access to these workplace fortresses can no longer be assured of job security.

Skill Needs and Skill Acquisition

Within the limits of child labor and equal employment opportunity laws, selection among potential employees is an employer's choice. Within the employer's range of discretion is whether to recruit employees who already have the skills to perform the job in question or to recruit those with the potential and then provide the training. Since youth are the most subject to being new hires, this range of employer discretion is of serious consequences for them. Roughly a third of all the jobs in the U.S. economy can be performed successfully by those with no more formal preparation than the skills normally accumulated from home, neighborhood and general schooling. Another third of the occupations also require no preentry training but can be learned from extensive experience or training on the job. Only the remaining one-third require formal and specific preentry preparation. There is no great mystery about which is which, although the choice among skill acquirement methods has received inadequate analysis.

Employers, in general, would prefer to shift the costs of training to the employee or to the public, especially since the employee can quit and carry away the skills provided by the employer. The employer would prefer to train only for those skills which are unavailable otherwise or for which external training institutions cannot be trusted to do an adequate job. Some skills are generic. That is, they are used in many industries. Few employers will be willing to provide training for those because the training investment is so easily lost. Other skills are firm-specific.

Thus, skill acquisition is an area where vested interest does not necessarily make for efficiency. Employers generally prefer to shift pre-employment training costs to the public schools, even where on-the-job training would be more efficient. They prefer to design on-the-job training so that workers are not employable by their competitors, even when interfirm mobility might be efficient. Public school personnel build their empires and security by training in any occupation in which students will enroll and for which taxpayers will pay. Private school proprietors sell whatever students can be persuaded to buy. Job seekers are more interested in promises of quick, sure placement than in the efficiency of acquiring skills.

Youth generally need guidance in their choices of skill acquisition among paying for their own preparation, at least through foregone earnings, if not tuition, finding an employer who will provide the training investment and in self defense enclose the worker into the protected core, threshing around at the periphery, acquiring skills haphazardly and belatedly if ever locking into job security, or identifying those jobs where sheer personality is sufficient for success.

## The Sources of Career Development

Awareness of this interaction between the development patterns of youth and adults and the demands of the labor market has led to theorizing about the career development process in search of interventions to aid youth in the difficult transition among the home, the school, the community and the workplace. For the most part, that body of theory has neglected the early childhood phase of career development. Therefore, it is useful to speculate about the impact of the preschool and home environments before

moving on to the more formal theories which have emerged out of educational psychology.

Early Childhood Career Development

Child psychologists have concluded that the years before a child is exposed to formal schooling may be more important in lifetime intellectual development than any later period of life. Just so, the exposure to the world of work gained during those impressionable and formative years may color all that follows thereafter. That can be true in at least the areas of work attitudes, basic skills, role stereotyping and career choice.

The child is father and mother of the adult. The home is the first observable workplace in which human effort performs services which enhance well being. The parents are the first trainers in employability development, both in their performance of, attitude toward and involvement of children in the work of the home and the attitudes they express explicitly or implicitly toward work outside the home. Household tasks are attacked aggressively and cheerfully, groused about or left undone. Chores are assigned to children as an opportunity for achievement and praise or as punishment. A parent leaves for work eagerly and brings home tales of accomplishment or "thank God its Friday!" It would be surprising to find an individual's lifetime attitudes toward work unaffected by this early exposure.

Similarly, the basic physical and mental skills are related to work. Consider the simple task of learning to zip a zipper (with velcroh--children don't tie shoes anymore). The task may seem meaningless and ordinary, but it is actually an important form of skill development, requiring manual dexterity and coordination. Those same skills will be part of many work situations. The child will likely attempt to zip a

zipper before he or she has developed the physical ability to do so, and will experience failure. The child's decision about when to try the task again will depend to some degree on the reactions of those witnessing the first attempt, usually parents. If the reaction is a supportive one, the child will try again soon, fully confident that he or she will succeed. If the reaction is a critical one, the child may be discouraged from trying again, feeling that new tasks are just too difficult. If there is no reaction at all, the child may become frustrated at being unable to perform the task, and the frustration may exhibit itself as anger at himself or herself, or more likely, at the garment containing the zipper. These patterns, reinforced over and over again in childhood, show up when the child becomes an adult and approaches skill development related to the workplace. The individual who received support as a child develops the inner confidence that allows him or her to work at acquiring new skills, knowing that they will eventually come. The individual who was overly criticized is reluctant to give the time and attention that new skill development requires, fearing failure. The person who received no support at all during the experimental stages of skill development is easily frustrated when trying to learn something new, and finds it easy to attach blame for his or her frustration to some person or object outside himself or herself.

It is largely in the home that children get their first delineating exposure to what tasks are considered to be appropriate for males and for females or for people of various racial, ethnic or socioeconomic groupings. Not only is individual career choice limited thereby but the whole labor market and society is burdened by the accumulation of resultant bias.

Finally, a youth cannot perceive himself or herself in an occupation or a work role of which the youth is unaware. Whether the child perceives employment to be an appropriate and essential role will effect how the youth approaches the labor market. Which occupations a youth begin to prepare for psychologically as well as in terms of skill development will be restricted by the breadth of occupational exposure beginning in childhood. Yet, since parenthood is a task assigned to amateurs and neighborhood environment is not a function of choice to children and youth, there are no organized efforts to make the early childhood exposure to the world of work a positive one.

Career Development Theory

If one is to assist youth to improve their attitudes toward work and to make appropriate decisions related to work, not just to obtain an immediate job but to increase chances for a successful working career, understanding the process of career development is necessary. In the past 30 years, psychologists have begun to probe this crucial phase of human development. Though today we stress that occupational skill training is not enough in preparation for employment, it was the emergence about a century ago of occupations requiring pre-entry training that first led to concern for career guidance. If there was to be pre-entry training for jobs other than the professions, there was need to determine who should be trained for which occupations. Since freedom of occupational choice was assumed in the United States, the issue of how people were to make those choices for themselves arose. What emerged became known as the trait and factor approach to vocational guidance. Human beings had certain traits--talents, abilities, interests and so forth. Jobs could be analyzed to involve certain factors. If it could be determined which factor best

suited which trait, happily-ever-after marriages between people and jobs could be achieved.

The trait and factor approach, though simplistic, was a significant contribution for its time and became the basis for psychometric testing and task analysis. In fact, the massive psychometric testing upon which military assignments were based during World War II raised the questions from which modern career development theory emerged. It became obvious that career choice behavior, job satisfaction and job success were much more complex phenomena than originally assumed. Occupational aspirations, stereotypes and relative prestige interacted with social status, socioeconomic background, parental influence and personal value systems in unexplored ways. Analysis of traits and factors might provide a basis for probability statements about success or failure but those might be little help in individual cases. Most important of all, it became apparent that human interests are seldom static. Individuals' preferences are constantly changing, including career preferences.

This experience sparked an area of research which still continues. Despite individual differences, psychologists found it was possible to generalize a process of human development and within it a process of career development. There were stages of life through which most people passed at roughly the same ages and each stage was somewhat predictably the base for the next. Since work played a role in self-satisfaction and status as well as in material well-being, career development somewhat paralleled the human development of which it was part. Psychological as well as economic well-being might be enhanced if more attention were paid to that career development process. Since in the United States the schools tend to be the residual societal agency assigned to fill whatever gaps other institutions

leave unfilled, career development became a concern of the schools. More recently, however, employers have begun to become aware of the significance of the concept to organizational well-being and career development has become an important component of research into organizational behavior.

In general and in brief, interaction between biological and institutional influences carry most individuals through a set of developmental changes. Infancy is concerned primarily with survival and security, early childhood with learning a mass of simple survival skills and interactions within a limited social world. The focus is essentially on self, but in terms of learning basic skills without introspection. Then there is a growing awareness of a broader world and a learning of another set of survival skills, now social rather than physical. In later childhood there tends to emerge a time of introspection--of examining oneself in the context of the broader society to determine "Who am I and where do I fit into the scheme of things?"

Considerable exploration is necessary over a substantial period of time to begin to find answers to those questions. Patterns of preference and ultimately of preferred lifestyle begin to emerge, shaped by environment and experience as well as self-direction. Choices are necessary throughout life but as time goes on, more and more of them become irreversible and require more careful and explicit decision-making. Maturity arrives when one knows who one is, can make a reasonable assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses and can accept and live with that knowledge, can make decisions and accept fully the responsibility for one's own decisions and actions. But maturity is never fully achieved and even if it were, it would not be the end of human development which ends only with the life of the individual.

Career development theories attempt, based on observation and research, to provide a predictive pattern for the career-related aspects of this human development process. There is not the consensus upon which to base a career development theory but there are generally recognized categories of career development theories.

One category emphasizes personality. It presumes that because of different personality structures, individuals are predisposed to certain needs. These needs direct the individual towards certain choices in search of either satisfaction or reduction of need. Certain types of occupations are more compatible with certain needs which predispose the individual toward those choices. Factors such as genetics, child-rearing practices and early childhood experiences are likely to be stressed as the predisposing factors in these theories.

Other theories stress the sociological basis of career development. Social class horizons limit the range of experience, perception and choice for all, regardless of socioeconomic level. A few people may be confronted with alternatives so numerous as to make choice a source of overwhelming conflict. Others may be compressed to almost no choice. Poverty may precondition social responses, educational attainment, intellectual competence and vocational ambitions. Parental ambitions and prejudice may be equally stifling to those at other levels. But in each case, the external environment is seen as the determining factor in these career development theories.

Others stress an information processing model. Limited information obviously limits and channels choice. But overwhelming amounts of unfiltered information may also lead to a premature career selection which is then defended by rationalization.

Economists have traditionally structured their theories on the concept of "economic man." That is, most people at most times can be expected to choose those occupations which will maximize the return to their own investments in themselves as human capital. Therefore, the interaction between the time and expense of training, on the one hand, and the expected lifetime income return from the occupation will predict occupational choice. But that theory is always prefixed by a ceteris paribus--all other things being equal, which they never are. It is useful in predicting how people in general will choose under prescribed conditions but not in predicting or guiding the career choice of particular individuals. At the level of the individual, economists are more likely to stress the influence of the economic constraints of the person's environment, akin to those called sociological theories above.

Another category of career development theory emphasizes the importance of self-concept. One's career-related choices are shaped by the mental image one has of himself or herself in various settings and circumstances. One learns by experience and socialization the kind of person one is or prefers to be in terms of capabilities, values, strengths, weaknesses and so forth and seeks occupations conceived as compatible with that image. As individual perceptions change, so do career preferences.

Each theorist would admit truth in all others but defend his or her emphasis. But all see some process of development from fantasy through growing realism to ultimate but not necessarily permanent choice. There is a stage of growing awareness of the role of work in the family, the society and personal life. There is a stage of exploration, seeking compatibility among self-concept, preferred lifestyle and occupation. But, until the age when actual employment experience is possible, that exploration must be

vicarious and fanciful. Ultimately decisions are forced by the passage of time, at least in terms of whether or not to seek temporary jobs and which ones and whether to continue in school or search for full-time employment. Early jobs are part of the exploratory process. Later ones may represent decisions as to occupation but a continuing exploration for the preferred environment in which to pursue that occupation. For most people, the occupational choice is probably made without consideration of long-range implications but predispositions still lie behind that choice and behind reasons for leaving off or continuing further search.

Vocational maturity, like personal maturity, never fully arrives but is approached and can be defined. Vocational maturity is achieved when one knows oneself, one's values and one's preferred life style, can pursue and process information for choosing a compatible occupation, can accept the responsibility and consequences of choice and can make objective judgments concerning the relative costs and benefits of continuance of change.

Psychologists have identified career development stages which parallel the "passages" of adult life. The teens and early twenties are periods of continuing exploration, a time of getting into the adult world. The late twenties and thirties involve getting established or settling down. During the forties, the individual arrives at mid-career with a career pattern pretty well set and predisposed to plateau, decline or continue growth. From there on it is a process of decline and coming to terms with one's inevitable mortality.

Study of the career development processes of children and youth have led to the conviction that career preparation in the schools should begin much earlier, not in terms of occupational training but in the development of values, the beginning of guided exploration and the development of

decision-making skills. That is the basis of the career education movement. These concepts of career development have also led vocational guidance and counseling away from simple testing and directed advice toward a process of guided self-discovery in career terms.

Career Education

One direct operational consequence of the emergence of career development theory was the career education movement of the 1970s. The program arose, as is so often the case, in education policy, under the impetus of federal funding pursued primarily by one U.S. commissioner of education and his staff and largely died out as that funding disappeared. Nevertheless, remnants survive and the principles are applicable to this discussion. Though specific programs and applications differed widely, central concern and sequence can be described briefly.

Career education has the dual objective of (1) using the entire educational experience to better prepare youth of all backgrounds and ambitions for career success in the full range of occupations and (2) using the potential career relevance of academic learning as a motivator for educational success. The first premise of career education is that the development of sound work values and positive attitudes toward work is more essential as a prerequisite to career success than the attainment of occupational skills. The latter can be attained at later stages in school or on the job, but values and attitudes are learned early and, if dysfunctional, are difficult to change.

Therefore, career education is expected to begin in the elementary school simply because there are so few ways to influence the home during the preschool years when value development is already underway. The elementary school assignment is primarily career awareness--making the

child aware of the existence of work and workers, the roles both play in life and society and the fact that the child will one day be one of those. The elementary stage coincides with the time in human development when the child is experiencing an enlarging awareness of the world outside the home and the neighborhood. Career awareness, therefore, merges into that growing social awareness.

Late childhood and early adolescence is the period for turning inward to examine oneself in relation to the broader society. "Who am I?" "What am I like?" "What can I become?" Career exploration becomes the appropriate assignment for the middle school or junion high. The student explores his or her talents, abilities and interests, alternative lifestyles and the occupations which are compatible with those lifestyles. It is impossible to become familiar with all of the 30,000 occupations in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles but they can be explored in broad categories such as those of the construction industry, office occupations and so forth, a breakdown which lends itself to examination of life-style consequences.

At the high school age come decisions that the youth cannot avoid, including the choice of friends, personal characteristics, courses of study, continuance in school and early jobs. Decision-making skills taught at that point can help in personal and career choices. It is also a time of preparation for next steps--jobs, college, the military, marriage, etc. Career education shifts to that emphasis as well, with preparation for college, for full-time employment, for job search and for placement.

Throughout school, it is emphasized that school work is work too and the values, attitudes and habits which make for success in the classroom are the same ones which will eventually make for success in the workplace.

Career education is not expected to be taught as a separate course but is to be integrated into every subject. Each teacher in every classroom is expected to emphasize the career relevance of the subject matter. There is a preference for integrated projects which allow the student to learn the content of several academic subjects in a context of productive employment-related activities. Playing at operating and patronizing a grocery store, running a newspaper or other community functions in an elementary classroom are examples.

Another key concept is collaboration between the school and employers, labor organizations and other community institutions. The classroom is viewed as only one among many learning environments and not necessarily the most effective one. Thus considerable use is made of field visits, classroom visitors and external community service projects. Linkages are also sought with the home with students learning of their parents' occupations as well as homemaking as an occupation. Considerable effort is put into breaking down occupational stereotypes by sex and race. The dignity of all work and workers is another concept usually emphasized.

For a time, career education became a substantial movement at the grass roots level with emotionally loyal adherents devoting tremendous efforts to develop and share their own classroom applications of the concept. Numerous trades and professional associations and service clubs endorsed it and several state legislatures gave it priority but not funding. However, without continued funding and without adoption by teacher training institutions, the career education program was never able to expand beyond its subsequently diminishing core. In retrospect, the lasting contribution was in the further theorizing about what is needed to

better prepare youth for work, even if no effective device for implementation was ever demonstrated.

Ingredients for Success

The successful will enter with self-esteem and self-confidence. He or she will have been encouraged from infancy to try new experiences and succeed in them. Parents, siblings and other influential people in his or her life will have been encouraging and the environment will have offered opportunities to experiment and to succeed and, therefore, to presume further success. Work will not be a new experience and it will, in general, have been a pleasant one. Success will have been experienced leading to achievement which will have been rewarding and satisfying.

This body of theory and attempts at its implementation is useful in clarifying the task of youth transition from school to work. It clarifies that thinking of labor market entrance as a one-time, once and for all event is a mistake. Most American youth begin their work experiences in the home and neighborhood with household chores, lawn moving, baby sitting and paper routes. They then enter the formal labor market in part-time and summer jobs of a rudimentary nature, participating sporadically as they juggle school and work and hop from job to job. They begin as target workers pursuing a particular short-term financial goal, and then enter an exploratory "try out" stage before choosing and settling down to an occupation, and finally an employer and job without making an irrevocable commitment to either.

The successful labor market entrant will have informal access to employment opportunity. Parents, relatives and friends will either be employers or have sufficient contact and influence with employers to assure getting the first and early jobs of a working career. The participant will

not be unduly concerned with the quality of early jobs because he or she will be confident that an unattractive or low prestige job will not become a permanent trap.

Once on the job, our successful participant will have sufficient physical and intellectual ability and basic education to do most jobs not requiring specialized preparation. He or she will have a wide enough exposure to the labor market through family and friends to be aware of a broad range of occupational alternatives and will rapidly learn of others. The general nature and content of those jobs will become familiar and the individual will have the self-confidence to pick and choose and try out a number of occupational alternatives.

Observation, study and experience will next lead to a tentative occupational choice. Family resources and contacts will be sufficient to be able to afford specialized training as needed or to obtain the opportunity for tryout experiences when training is not needed or while it is being obtained. Ultimately there will be access to the chosen occupations but a secure enough financial base to change and try another if one occupation does not turn out to be as attractive as expected. Throughout, our successful participant will have the personality attractiveness to impress potential employers, the interpersonal skills to get along with supervisors, fellow employees and customers and the habits of industriousness to be productive. With all of that, how could he or she miss?

Whether the disadvantaged, minority and central city youth who bear the major burdens of youth unemployment are more lacking than others in these characteristics of success or whether they simply lack the opportunity to exercise the abilities they have is a matter of controversy.

Central city employers report that they are rarely turned down when they offer a job to a youth, and that the youth are generally capable of and work satisfactorily at the jobs they are offered. Such youth want essentially what more advantaged youth want--the respect of their peers, a sense of self-worth, a combination of security and challenge. There is indication, however, that what it takes for these youth to win peer respect may be the opposite of what is required for employer acceptance. In addition, little security or challenge awaits them in many of the jobs available.

Despite suggestions that many such youth find more of both in the subterranean than in the regular labor market, the evidence suggests that relatively few are into illegal or "shady" activities to any significant degree and that very few of those who are so involved find it lucrative. What is reasonably clear is that such youth are less likely, on the average, to have the same successful and encouraging work experiences in childhood, and the same degree of successful working role models as their more advantaged peers. They are unlikely to have experienced the same quality of education. They do not have access to the same extent of employment opportunity at the labor market entrance. Dead end jobs appear more threatening to them because they perceive so many people around them trapped in such low status work. Persistent employment problems among large groups of youth of common socioeconomic and locational characteristics are prima facie evidence of some combination of lack of opportunity and lack of the prime qualifications of employability. Assisting them to the same results as the successful is the highest priority in the youth-to-adult transition.

## Alternatives in Preparation for Work

One who would be helpful in assisting in the transition from adolescence to the adult world of work should recognize these realities:

1. Employers own jobs and ultimately determine who, among those available and seeking for work, obtain jobs.
2. The employer's primary interest is in finding--with minimum recruiting costs--those employees who will be the most dependable, least disruptive and the most productive at the lowest labor cost.
3. Youth are young, inexperienced, unsettled and products of their environment as well as of their individual predilections. For success in the world of work, they must eventually adapt themselves to employer requirements.
4. Despite the gradual introduction to the labor market through home chores, paid neighborhood services and part-time jobs, the sociological distance between home and the world of work is the widest and adolescence the longest it has ever been.
5. Work opportunities are bifurcating between those of minimal requirements and high competition and those of greater credentialing and knowledge and skill requirements.
6. Job security is lessening in the United States while competition for jobs, in general, is not.
7. Because employing institutions and workers are mutually dependant, most of both will get together somehow. Therefore, most youth will find their way into the world of work with reasonable success. Others will be permanently scarred in the process.

8. That matching must occur through an existing set of institutions which can be slowly modified, but new ones will be created over time when the social, political and economic pressure is sufficient.
9. The process of transition from adolescence to work maturity can be improved for all, but the priorities should be those currently experiencing the least success.
10. For all youth who would be successful in the labor market, there is necessary a combination of job getting, job doing and job keeping skills as well as those skills necessary for coping with life in all of its ramifications.

With all of that in mind, it is possible to evaluate the contributions of current institutions and make suggestions for improvement.

The Role of the Family

Job opportunities available to youth during and upon completion of the transition period are more dependant upon family contacts than any other single variable. As noted above, home environment is probably the single most important contributor or deterrent to preparation for the world of work. Yet little is done to make the influence positive. To do so would be difficult and expensive and potentially coercive. The need would be to:

1. increase the enthusiasm for work among parents;
2. educate them to provide positive attitudes to their children.

There is a small private movement for Parent Effectiveness Training and a few schools offer elective high school and college courses for prospective parents. It is doubtful that any of them includes world of work orientation in their curricula but what that content should be is readily apparent. It would include:

1. Making parents and potential parents aware of their inevitable influence on their children's attitudes toward work and their likelihood of career success.
2. Helping parents and potential parents to improve their own attitudes toward work.
3. Teaching them how to use their own attitudes and the availability of household chores to provide positive anticipation of work roles and positive rewards for the productive efforts of children and youth.
4. Teaching parents and potential parents the dynamics of labor markets so that they can pass that information on to their children.
5. Teach them to reinforce their children's involvement in informal learning activities and subsequent part-time and summer employment experiences.
6. Teaching parents and potential parents about the range of occupational choices available and how to expose their children to the maximum range of those choices.
7. Teaching parents and potential parents the dynamics of decision-making and techniques for teaching those skills to their children.

Whatever is done, the families with the most negative impact upon their youths' labor market futures are the least likely to have access to such assistance. In times of stringency in public resources, it is unlikely that a widespread program of parental training in career development techniques will be undertaken, but it is worth recognizing that no single program has more potential for improving the home/school-to-work transition.

General Education

It would be a sadder world than it is if education were to perceive its primary purpose to be preparation for the labor market, but that certainly must be among its highest priorities. Other contributors to the Youth and America's Future deliberations will be better prepared than I to explore the contributions of the formal education system in the rites of passage from youth to adulthood. I will limit my comments to education's potential contributions to preparation for work.

Short of a career education effort such as that already described, the major contributions of general elementary and secondary education to the world of work preparation are basic skill development, acculturation, self-discipline and preparation for further post-secondary development. No statistics should be necessary to prove that most jobs in the U.S. economy require the ability to at last read, write and do simple arithmetic. It is less often noted but no less true that a substantial level of technological familiarity and exposure to the rudiments of the scientific method are required, though much of that is absorbed by simply growing up in a gadget rich society. Career decision-making also requires a substantial understanding of the external environment and self-analysis in relation to it. One without the basic skills normally acquired in the elementary and secondary education process is sharply limited in job potential and the potential for further preparation, whether in school or on the job.

A rereading of the employer expectations with which this discussion began will illustrate that many of those characteristics are acquired in this country primarily in the schools. Few employers are likely to be impressed without that polish.

One likely reason that those who are successful in school are ordinarily successful in the labor market is that so much of present-day employment is so much like the school environment. At any rate, the ability to accept a school assignment and complete it to specification is exactly the ability an employer seeks. The school which teaches that self discipline to its students has made a major process contribution to their future success, aside from questions of substance.

Finally and obviously, there is no postsecondary education and training without success at the K-12 level. However, all of this means little to those who reject or are rejected by the prevailing educational system. Most communities which have tried to take youth preparation seriously have had to establish some kind of alternative school program, either to prevent dropout or to seek to win back those who have already "voted with their feet." Some examples of alternative school approaches may be useful.

Experience-based career education emphasized employment experience as a method of general as well as vocational education. The students in this program spent about 50 percent of their program time at learning sites, working directly with community instructors. The program used a detailed task analysis procedure to identify the full learning potential of each employer or community site and to translate this potential into learning objectives. The objectives then became the basis for individualized projects which students completed in the community. The curriculum was divided into three content areas: life skills, basic skills and career development.

The five life skills categories were (1) creative development, (2) critical thinking, (3) personal and social development, (4) science and (5)

functional citizenship. Lifelong learning, personal growth and relationship of individuals to broader community, national and world concerns were emphasized. The life skills content area also included a set of "survival skills" such as knowledge of checking accounts, insurance, budgeting, auto maintenance and so forth. The EBCE students were required to demonstrate competence in each of those areas. The basic skills components concentrated on reading, mathematics, writing and listening and speaking skills. The career development component focused on identifying career interests, understanding the world of work, general employability skills and career knowledge.

Each year, individual students completed ten projects, two in each life skills area. A set of 13 survival skills or competencies had to be completed by all students in the program. Students spent a minimum of fifteen hours a week at an employer or community site and completed a minimum of five career explorations per year. Students' progress in the program was carefully monitored and recorded. Individualized problem-centered projects which the students completed at community sites encouraged them to manage their own learning and perceive the relationship among personal goals, career options and specific knowledge skills. When students left the program they received a certification portfolio containing performance information as well as a standard high school diploma.

A more school-based model was the career intern program developed by the Opportunities Industrialization Center of Philadelphia. The interns (they were <u>never</u> called students) were either dropouts or those underperforming and on the verge of leaving regular central city high schools. They had to have at least a fifth-grade reading level and not

been characterized by major disciplinary problems. Essentially, they were self-selected for the program which moved them from a standard overcrowded city high school with overworked staff and minimum counseling to a unique school which accepted only 250 per year and had a high student-teacher/ counselor ratio.

Each intern participated in a career counseling seminar and prepared a career development plan which led to a series of one week "hands-on" experiences with employers in fields of the intern's interest. Meantime, the interns studied a required curriculum and electives, all oriented around career applications and consisting of specially prepared individualized materials. The structure was essentially ungraded and students worked at their own pace until they had completed the material required for graduation.

Careful records were kept of interns and a control group. The clearest gains were in the number of former dropouts and academic failures who had not only graduated from high school, but entered post-secondary education. The subsequent employment records of the interns were somewhat but not notably better than the controls, but the interns were much less likely to be out of school and out of work. About one-third of the interns dropped out again, but that compared to 85 percent of those controls who were still in school at the time the interns entered the program.

Evaluators found that all school conduct of the interns improved: attendance, keeping appointments, initiative, completing assignments, test-taking skills, working well with peers and teachers, attention to classwork, willingness to repeat failed courses, reading and math skills (though the latter were still below national norms). As to employability, they improved markedly in career planning and career decision-making

ability and in the behavioral protocols required by employers. Conclusions were that the success arose from a supportive atmosphere, ready availability and dedication of teachers, counselors and other staff, dealing with the intern as "a whole person," treating the school and program as a tool rather than an entity, providing a school experience congruent with realistic life goals and expecting the interns to make their own decisions and to perform.

Whether such an approach is generally replicable is open to question. The costs beyond the preparation of curriculum, which could have served many schools, were somewhat greater per student than in general high schools but not above the standard for vocationally oriented high schools. The major problems would appear to be staff dedication and employer cooperation when generalized to large numbers. Nevertheless, the program seemed to indicate that imagination, dedication and clear and relevant goals can work when made available to youth who want a second chance.

Those two are alternative school programs of some substantial experience. Such efforts come and go as public interest waxes and wanes and continuity is rare. Two recent programs for which outcome data is limited illustrate a more recent tendency toward employer involvement in locally sponsored programs. In these cases, a combination of charismatic leadership, firm discipline and employer involvement with the schools persuades substantial numbers of students that learning is worthwhile. Central city youth tend to lack the access routes to good jobs that are supplied by employed relatives and friends in other settings. Nevertheless, those persuaded to remain in school do appear to succeed despite that handicap. There is no magic formula. The Boston Compact and Philadelphia Academies programs appear to operate successfully on this philosophy.

The Boston Compact seeks to improve school-to-work linkages. In return for the school system's guarantee of its graduates' competencies, the career passport, major Boston firms agree to hire the products of the Boston public schools. A full-time career specialist in each school coordinates linkages to the business community and teaches job-search skills. Kids in the school district, where 50 percent historically have not graduated, begin to see jobs as the reward for graduation and increase their work effort accordingly. At the one-year follow-up of the 1984 graduating class, 87 percent of those with full-time jobs located their jobs through the compact. The compact has recently entered an agreement with unions in the area to increase the school districts' graduate share of new apprenticeships by 5 percent per year and a pact with 25 universities and colleges in the area to raise the number of entering Boston blacks by 5 percent each year.

The Philadelphia High School Academies are vocationally oriented schools targeting students who, because of poor attendance, limited academic skills and other circumstances, do not qualify for regular vocational education programs. There is a partnership between private employers and the schools. The business community provides an administrator for each academy and a coordinator for the overall program as well as specialized equipment, supplies and job slots at company work sites. The school system supplies the facilities and teaching and administrative staff. In a school system with a 49 percent dropout rate, less than one percent drop out of the academies. Though few of the 80 percent minority students have achievement test scores above the thirtieth percentile, 85 percent succeed in finding a job after graduation.

Vocational education, both secondary and post-secondary, merits separate discussion. Academic education at the post-secondary level is a topic too vast to explore adequately here but a few comments are appropriate.

Despite some concern expressed a few years ago about the overeducated American, it remains true that the more years of formal education, the lower the average unemployment rate and the higher the lifetime earnings--by a substantial margin. If nothing else, postsecondary education serves as an aging vat, providing an acceptable and respected holding activity while the youth passes through those difficult years between the late teens and early twenties, automatically becoming more employable in the process. Fortunately, postsecondary academic institutions are never required to justify themselves on the basis of dropout rates and training related placement rates as are secondary and occupational training institutions and programs. College Placement offices also provide a structured access to desirable jobs for their graduates.

Higher education pays off in the labor market but little thanks to the educational institutions which rarely see it as their responsibility to prepare people for that labor market. Rather, employers, because of the persistently rising need for people with a high level of knowledge and understanding or because of their own false expectations, persistently hire the products of higher education and then invest massively in retraining them. That is true of the professional schools--medicine, law, engineering and business--as well as the social, physical and natural sciences and humanities. I am not prepared to argue that the society would be better off with a more labor market-conscious higher education system, though employers and the economy would likely profit.

If general education did ever commit itself to employability development, it is not difficult to extract from the employer expectations earlier enumerated what the necessary curriculum should include. Other than occupational skills training to be discussed later the emphasis would be on self-analysis, personal development and job-getting and job-keeping labor market skills.

The successful labor market participant should have at least some reasonably clear notion of what he or she wants to accomplish in the short run and the long run, what he or she wants out of employment and what his or her strengths, weaknesses, obstacles and opportunities are. Values clarification exercises help develop those values, attitudes and habits which lead to personal conduct and productivity acceptable to employers. The stereotyping of occupational roles by race and sex need to be examined so that the job seeker will know how to avoid being cut off from employment opportunities by either personal or societal biases. Both males and females need assertiveness training to pursue with confidence (and impress with that confidence the guardians of) the opportunities for which they become prepared. The coping skills of self-discipline and self-management, problem solving, decision-making, abstract thinking, processing information, adapting to authority, controlling aggression while retaining assertiveness, reconciling conflicting demands and interests plus skills in interpersonal relations, along with the ability to deal with society's infrastructure such as transportation and credit systems and consumer economics, are all contributors to labor market success.

Labor market skills should include (a) the information and the decision-making ability to develop and choose among available employment opportunities in the short-run and to fit those into a career pattern in

the longer run, (b) sufficient understanding of the dynamics of labor markets to be able to function successfully within them and the information to make reasonably wise decisions and (c) the skills to search out, obtain and keep a job. It is some kind of statement on our values that practically every high school in the United States teaches every student to drive an automobile but few, if any, teach the more practical skills of job search. Literature and curriculum materials are available for those purposes.

Vocational Education

Vocational education has taken a lot of misguided criticism over the years, primarily because neither its critics nor its defenders understood the nature of the youth labor markets it served. It has been criticized for training for obsolete occupations with obsolete equipment without understanding that (1) most of its enrollees were in the career exploration rather than the career preparation stage and that (2) at best it was preparing only for entry level positions with further preparation to occur on the job with the employer's equipment. Most formal evaluations have used training-related placement rates or post-training earnings comparisons with general education students. Since few high school vocational enrollees had made an occupational commitment and vocational education is more expensive than general education, the former always loses in cost-benefit comparisons at the high school level. For the same reasons, cost-benefit comparisons are generally positive for post-secondary vocational and technical education. By then the enrollee has generally made a career commitment and is into serious career preparation.

High school level vocational enrollees can be usefully divided among those who casually enroll in one or more vocational classes of passing

interest, those who are in vocational classes to escape the academic classroom and those few who have at least tentatively made a career commitment. Add to the fact that jobs with high skill content cannot be learned in the limited time available in high school but must be reserved for a post-secondary setting.

This is not a plea to remove vocational education from the high school setting but to recognize it for what it is--career exploration and dropout prevention--and structure it accordingly. For those who know what they want and will use it, either in post-high school employment or as a base for further training at the post-secondary level, job preparation is appropriate. That is undoubtedly the reason that office occupation courses for girls seem to have the highest payoff. For career exploration, which can also serve for dropout prevention, the emphasis should be on exploring a range of options and gaining generic skills rather than concentrating on a specific occupation.

At the post-secondary level, the scene changes sharply. Those who do not yet know what they want to do generally either leave school, at least for a time, or enroll in a more general program in a community college or elsewhere in higher education. Those institutions serve as aging vats until some career decision is made, often by default. Those who enroll in a specific post-secondary vocational or technical course have generally made up their mind and will probably become employed in an occupation related to their training at that point. For them, the most useful assistance is assessment of the youth's career potential and guidance related to the employment outlook.

Youth Work Experience

It is worth noting once more that the school-to-work transition for most American youth is not a one-time thing. Most begin with baby sitting or other paid activities such as paper routes and progress to after-school and summer jobs. There is no data at earlier ages but the labor force participation rates of the 16-24 population have risen steadily over the past 20 years, despite the lengthening period of school attendance. Whereas financial need may be the primary motivation, the evidence is strong that those who are employed during their schooling are more likely to have a job waiting upon completion, find a job more quickly when they do not and enjoy greater employment stability and earnings thereafter.

If such experiences could be channeled into an orchestrated exploratory process, they would be even more important to the youth transition process than they are. The nearest approach to such orchestration is the cooperative vocational education programs in which the student spends part of the day in the classroom learning skills and part of the day on the job earning while learning to apply the skills.

There is also the warning of too much of a good thing. Education and preparation is the goal and work experience an adjunct. If short-term earnings are allowed to become the objective, there are almost certain to be offsetting future costs.

Proprietary Schools

The foregoing discussion was by implication limited to publically-financed vocational education. However, mention should be made of the proprietary school option. There is a constant flow of fly-by-night schools but they do not last. They are expensive and, if enrollment does not result in high placement rates, the word gets around, enrollment drops

and they go out of business. A proprietary school of substantial tenure is therefore a good bet for employment preparation. However, the tuition must be sufficient to cover the full cost of training including a profit. Since few can meet the tuition costs for long periods of training, the emphasis is on those occupations for which the skill content is high but specialized so that training is necessary but can be obtained in a relatively short length of time. Within those limitations, they are a useful approach for those who can afford them.

Military Training

Military training also has its advantages and disadvantages in the youth transition. It serves as an aging vat bridging an unsettled time in the lives of many youth. It provides a controlled and disciplined environment helpful to many. For those who receive no specialized training, it also wastes a lot of time. For those trained, the training is generally excellent, though narrowly focussed on military needs.

Most disillusionment concerning the military as a training institution preparing for civilian life has three sources: (1) the failure to receive the training expected, (2) training for military specialties for which there is no equivalent civilian occupation and (3) failure of the recipient to seek training-related employment following discharge from the service. The first two can be avoided in most cases by the enlistee, assuming that there is a guarantee rather than a mere recruiter's promise. The third is another manifestation of the uncertain career commitments of youth. Follow-up studies have shown a slightly higher rate of training-related placement for those with civilian applicable military specialties in comparison with recipients of civilian vocational education at the same age. With enlistment care and career commitment, therefore, military service becomes a useful component of the transition process.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship has always played a much more limited role in youth work transition in the U.S. than in Europe. That has been part of the greater fluidity of American life and as European youth have patterned their lifestyles more after their American counterparts, apprenticeship is declining there as well.

The use of apprenticeship is also limited for reasons of industrial and occupational mix. It is applicable primarily to those employment situations involving a combination of high skills, great variability in application and high cost of workplace simulation. Construction is the classic case in the United States and enrolls the bulk of apprentices. The skills are substantial. There is a wide range of applications of those skills including several crafts and many types of work situations within each craft. To simulate all of those applications within a classroom or laboratory setting would be logistically as well as financially impossible. Some vocational programs build and sell houses as a training method but that allows training only in the relatively limited skills of home construction. Occasionally also off-site training in the operation of earth moving machinery occurs but that involves only a few entry-level skills. Commercial and industrial construction is much more complex. Apprenticeship was also traditional in printing and metalworking occupations but, because the variety of applications is less and the machinery more readily available and applicable to the classroom setting, the tendency is to shift entry level training to the vocational and technical schools.

U.S. employers have also resisted apprenticeship because of the high mobility of American workers, especially youth. The employers are

reluctant to invest in the training of those who may leave to apply their skills for another employer--perhaps a competitor. That reluctance has been offset in three ways. One is by promotion and pressure from unions which have an interest in using apprenticeship as a means of entry control as well as attempting to keep the skill supply within the union. The second is by restricting apprentice entry to those older and career-committed. The typical apprentice is in the mid-twenties. Traditionally, limiting apprentice opportunity to primarily the relatives of journeymen was an assurance of career commitment. Because of the commitments involved, many employers view apprenticeship primarily as a means of preparing potential supervisors. Finally, in nonunion situations, the employer makes apprenticeship a promotion opportunity allocated on the basis of seniority after commitment has been demonstrated.

Because of employer reluctance and tight union control, apprenticeship until the 1960s was the exclusive preserve of white, young adult males with family attachments to the industry. Considerable progress has been made in opening those doors over the past 20 years. Therefore, apprenticeship is an attractive option for limited numbers but only at the end of the youth transition. Differences in American culture and labor markets make it unlikely to play the major role it has in the past in some more structured European environments.

On-the-Job Training

On-the-job training is the black hole of knowledge in labor market research because it tends to be informal, ubiquitous and totally within the control of management. Nevertheless, it is the most used method of skill development. In a 1983 Labor Department Survey, thirty-eight percent of all employees reported that they had received the skills which qualified

them for their jobs through employer-sponsored training and 35 percent reported that they had been provided skill improvement training by their current employers.

As noted earlier, it is primarily for firm-specific jobs that employers provide training because they ordinarily have no alternative. A few industry-wide employer-sponsored training programs exist but such cooperation is rare in the United States.

Case study experience suggests a vast range of quality in OJT. It ranges from merely showing a new employee how to do a job and putting the newcomer under the tutelage of an experienced hand all the way to employing instructors and developing curriculum materials. There is the buddy system, the supervisor-trainer and socalled vestibule training--which is essentially a classroom in the workplace. The most structured programs involve needs assessment, task analysis, curriculum design, formalized instruction, skill demonstration, performance testing and periodic refurbishment.

OJT is normally narrow in scope designed to meet the performance needs of the immediate job with retraining as the job changes. It is limited as a device for youth transition because it is an internal labor market function, subordinate to hiring and selection. The employer first makes the decision to hire the youth and then to invest further by providing training. Beyond the subsidized OJT of employment and training programs and cooperative vocational education, the emphasis must be on advising and assisting youth to obtain the kinds of jobs in which the employers are willing to invest in the training, rather than directly on OJT as a transition device.

Second Chance Programs

Youth have been proportionately over-represented among the enrollees in the employment and training programs funded under the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1963 (MDTA), the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1974 (CETA) and the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 (JTPA). MDTA had no programs limited to youth, yet about two-fifths of classroom trainees and one-third of on-the-job trainees were less than 22 years of age. Under CETA, the same ratios prevailed for classroom and on-the-job training but about one-fourth of public service employees were youth. In addition, there were the Job Corps and Summer Youth Employment and a few other smaller programs which were totally for youth. Based on those experiences and the political pressures from youth-serving organizations, the authors of JTPA wrote into it the requirement that at least 40 percent of its enrollees (other than in displaced worker programs) be youth.

The reasons for this relative focus on youth are several:

1. The climate of a youth oriented "war on poverty" coupled with a ripening baby boom into which the employment and training programs were introduced.
2. The search for a supplement to an education system which served the mainstream well but the culturally disadvantaged hardly at all.
3. Shrinking of the unskilled and semiskilled production jobs which once provided entrance to the labor market for youth of limited education.
4. The eruption of teen-age pregnancy sparking a rising concern that those who are apparently destined to become single family heads become self-sufficient.

Overall, the employment and training programs have been moderately successful with sufficient placement of completers at adequate wage rates to provide a positive ratio of benefits over costs. But for youth, the results have been mixed, depending upon the particular program components. The problem remains that kids will be kids and some components are better at accommodating to that than others.

Classroom training in an employment and training program generally occurs in similar but lesser quality settings than postsecondary vocational training. For the younger enrollees, the results are similar to those of secondary level vocational education. Many of the youth are not yet ready to settle down to a training-related job. Employers are also equally restrained in their commitments to potentially mobile youth.

Since there are always more eligible applicants than training funds, the pressure is always on to limit per trainee expenditures and therefore the duration and quality of training. Training duration under MDTA and CETA averaged around 26 weeks; under JTPA it is only half that. Because of those cost considerations and because program success is measured in the short-run by placement rates rather than income gain, training is predominately in occupations for which training periods are short and openings plentiful. Those are the rudimentary jobs in every community which typically experience high turnover--food service, building service, automotive specialties, upholstering and lower-level clerical and health care occupations.

Throughout the employment and training experience, stipends have been an issue for classroom training. It was difficult for the poor to survive training without financial assistance. Yet receipt of a stipend could become the wrong incentive for enrolling in training. Under MDTA, youthful

enrollees received $20 per week to cover personal needs, yet not be overly attractive. CETA paid the minimum wage which provided many youth more for training than they received for work, before and after. JTPA reacted to the "program junkie" by throwing out the baby with the bath water. All stipends were eliminated which means that only those youths with family support can enroll. In part for the lack of stipends and because of restricted budgets, classroom training under JTPA is more likely to involve such nonskill areas as job search training than it is substantive occupational skill training.

Having said all of that, classroom training had positive cost-benefit results under MDTA and CETA for youth as well as adults. Data is available for no such calculations under JTPA. Results beyond immediate placement rates and first job wage are taken on faith. The MDTA and CETA experience consistently proved the multiplied cost-benefit gains available from longer training with higher skills and more basic education enrichment, but under JTPA budgets have triumphed over experience.

Under all three programs, youth have profited well when enrolled in on-the-job training. In these programs, the employer generally receives one-half the wage for the first 500 hours of employment, trusting that retention will occur thereafter. The obstacle is that employers are reluctant to accept youth for on-the-job training opportunities.

Job Corps is the employment and training program most often touted for its success. It is a residential vocational training program, also providing substantial communal living skills to its captive audience. It enrolls the least prepared of the youth population yet finds substantial success with enough of them to justify the cost of the whole. About two-thirds drop out without substantial training but the gains for the

remaining third give the whole program a substantial cost-benefit ratio when crime reduction as well as earning gains are considered.

MDTA had no work experience programs but there were simultaneous parallels under the Economic Opportunity Act. CETA adopted these work experience activities and expanded on them. They provided activity and income to low income youth (as well as offering summertime riot insurance in central cities). But their cost-benefit experience based on post-enrollment earnings was generally negative. That is, the enrollees earned less than the comparison groups who had not enrolled. The programs provided aging vats for difficult years but, apparently, the discipline was never sufficient to inculcate good work habits.

CETA placed most of its emphasis on public service employment but few youth were ever involved. Most significantly, the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act amendments to CETA in 1977 which died out in 1980 produced a variety of intriguing experiments in youth transition involving basic education, attitudinal development, various levels of wage subsidy, alternative schools, extension of second chance programs into the schools as early as age 14, employment guarantees as an incentive for school completion and a range too extensive to describe.

The problem of inadequate basic education skills was discovered early in MDTA. It was learned that those who had been unwilling to sit still for basic education in the formal school system would do so if it was integral to skill training and obviously job related. Since JTPA has little occupational training for youth, a basic education component is now being required within the Summer Youth Employment Program. The hope is that some of the summertime retrogression in educational achievement, to which students from low income homes are particularly prone, can be reversed

thereby. Workplace literacy has become a high priority to Secretary of Labor Brock. MDTA and CETA experience suggest that it will be most successful if integrated into training or employment programs.

As noted, JTPA has come to place considerable emphasis on job search training, primarily because it can be done at relatively low cost. Such programs have generally had promising results for those who are otherwise attractive for their employability. Job search is essentially a marketing activity. Marketing is essential to most every product but the product must precede the marketing effort. Budget conscious emphasis on job search may tend toward selection of those who are currently marketable and neglectful of those who are not.

Looking back over the 25 years of federal second chance programs, a number of significant lessons emerge for youth transition. Among them:

1. Youth who have failed their first chance cannot simply be recycled into similar institutions and systems. Facilities, programs and staffs cannot reflect simply another school. There must be sympathy and rapport, relevance but discipline. Many of the skill centers developed under MDTA which carried over into CETA but have largely disappeared under JTPA, as well as the Job Corps Centers, have supplied this unique combination.
2. Subsistence must be available for those for whom it is essential but it cannot be at a level which makes it the primary objective of enrollment.
3. The curriculum should encompass all of those job-getting and job-keeping as well as job-doing skills enumerated earlier representing employer expectations of employee characteristics and performance.

4. A smorgasbord of employment-related services have been developed all of which are useful and needed by some but none by all enrollees. There must be tailoring and sequencing possibilities supported by constant monitoring of progress.
5. Employment and income is the goal and the motivation and the relevance to that goal must be apparent.
6. Kids are still kids and all are not ready to settle down to the pursuit of employability. Compassionate discipline, but discipline, in the working and learning environment will have self-selection effects in restricting assistance to those who demonstrate commitment.

## Concentration in Youth Transition

The fact remains that most American youth do not do badly in the adolescence to world of work transition. Not that a great many youth are not troubled. But for those from reasonably affluent socio-economic circumstances the challenge is to avoid permanent adolescence. Their obstacles are not labor market access.

There was in the 1960s a program called the Concentrated Employment Program which sought to concentrate the resources of MDTA and the Economic Opportunity Act on a few particularly troubled central cities. It was not a bad idea, though its scope was necessarily limited by the resources of those two modest programs. With resources even scarcer today, it makes at least equal sense to focus efforts to improve the youth transition upon those in the greatest need.

They are not difficult to identify. Those families in the most economic difficulty today are the recent immigrants, the displaced workers, the female-headed families and the central city families, none of those categories being mutually exclusive. Those in rural poverty are too few

and scattered to concentrate upon. Most immigrants are better off than they were from whence they came. They had the "git up and git" to do so and seem generally to be making progress in their new environment. The displaced worker problem is a difficult one but not one likely to have serious intergenerational impacts. There is generally a strong work ethic, good schools and other effective institutions to keep the youth transition focussed. The same is true where female-headed families are scattered among the general population.

The concentration of problems remains, as it has for the past generation, in the central city environments of deteriorating economies, perverse population trends and dysfunctional youth lifestyles. It is useful to think of these locations as underdeveloped societies. There are always more jobs than central city residents. But with the residents lacking the essential skills, employers import expatriates from the suburbs to fill the more attractive of the jobs. Aggressive economic revitalization efforts are going on in many of these cities but the employment benefits resound more to the suburban commuters or residents of regentrified Yuppie enclaves than to the core residents. If the yearning for quick fixes could be avoided and social energy generated for an intergenerational youth transition effort, it is not too difficult to chart what it would look like.

There would be a school-based program of parent effectiveness training which would include, along with general preparation for parenthood, an emphasis on the world of work orientation needs of children as described in Mangum, et al., Your Child's Career. Incentives would be provided for parents to attend evening classes as well as offering such a class in the high schools. Neighborhood elementary schools would be structured around

the career awareness emphasis of Hoyt, et al., Career Education in the Elementary School. Junior highs would adopt the career exploration principles of Evans, et al., Career Education in the Middle/Junior High School. Hoyt, et al., Career Education in the High School could provide the blueprint for career exploration and decision-making at that stage. Vocational education with an exploratory emphasis and employer involvement a la the Boston Compact and the Philadelphia Academies would be integrated into that approach. Alternative school programs along the lines of experienced-based career education or the career intern program would be available for the most drop-out prone. The high schools and alternative schools would include parenting training and the values clarification, assertiveness, labor market dynamics and job search training curriculum described in Mangum, The Process of Employability Development: Theory, Practice and Curricula. One and two-year programs of post-secondary occupational training would be available with stipends based jointly on need and performance for youth from low income families. Employers would provide part-time and summer work experience and would commit to hire any youth who successfully completed a stated program variously prescribed for the different occupations. On-the-job training and apprenticeship would follow as appropriate. Loan or grant supported higher education would be guaranteed to all who qualified. Hiring and promotion preference would be guaranteed to central city residents. Every aspect of the program would be conditioned upon performance. Whether undertaken in one city or many, the experiment would test whether in an environment of pervasive opportunity, the youth now foundering within their deprived circumstances would do as well as those currently advantaged.

Its only a dream, but then, why not? The schools and the employers and the jobs are all there now. Its a matter of focusing on objectives and concentrating effort.

## Summary

Though there is always room for improvement, most American youth make a reasonable transition from adolescence to adult labor force participation. Nevertheless, there is a substantial minority who are permanently scarred in the process, relegated to a life of marginal labor force attachment. The key to both improving the performance of the successful and remedying the disadvantages of the victims is to devise solutions which are consistent with labor market reality and the dynamics of human development, particularly in the area of career development. While international comparisons are interesting, there is little of cross-country comparison that is promising. In fact, the rest of the world's youth is more likely to pattern themselves after ours than we are to find solutions from sharply different cultures.

The simple most productive step would be to train parents to make a more positive contribution to career awareness, exploration, preparation and access. But the families which have the most negative impacts are those least likely to seek, find or profit from such a challenge.

The U.S. education system has largely rejected career education. Nevertheless, U.S. schools are a positive force in the transition for most youth. Those attributes which make for success in school also make for success in the workplace. Still, that positive influence could be enhanced by examining employer expectations and introducing into the curriculum those attributes most likely to meet those requirements. Throughout,

priority should go to job-getting and job-keeping skills over job-doing ones which the employer often produces.

However, in a world of scarce resources, we are unlikely to take much action on behalf of the transition needs of all youth. Better to watchfully neglect that which is working reasonably well. Concentrate on that relatively small number who are being permanently scarred by their childhood and adolescent labor market-related experiences and have little to look forward to as adults.

It is not the knowledge nor the resources which is lacking but the commitment and the organizational skill.

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He served in advisory roles to every administration from Eisenhower to Carter, serving on a full-time basis during the Kennedy and Johnson years. More recently, he served as a consultant to the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources and is member and past chairman of the National Council on Employment Policy and a member and committee chairman of the Utah State Job Training Coordinating Council. He has also served as advisor to many foreign governments and is currently a consultant to the World Bank. He is a labor arbitrator on Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, National Mediation Board, American Arbitration Association and private panels.

He has taught at Harvard, Brigham Young and George Washington Universities, as well as at Utah. He is author of more than 25 books and numerous monographs and articles in professional journals.

A COMMENTARY

on Garth Mangum's

## YOUTH TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO THE WORLD OF WORK

by **Marvin Lazerson**

This is a complicated essay with a number of important arguments. It is also poorly organized and repetitious. I thus think the most useful service I can provide is to clarify the basic themes, before commenting on the essay's strengths and weaknesses.

Mangum's essential argument is that there are different sets of youth whose transition to the world of work should be assessed differently. Almost all youths go through a complex period of experimentation and exploration in their personal relationships, lifestyles, and educational and work experiences. Most ultimately make a satisfactory transition to adulthood, successfully adjusting to the world of work. But some youths, primarily but not exclusively disadvantaged, experience and behave in exaggerated ways. They go through the transition to adulthood painfully and at great personal and social cost. Many never make a successful transition at all.

Mangum pursues this theme of an adolescence that is experienced by almost all American youth and an adolescent group whose problems divide them from the majority throughout his essay, especially by looking at youth employment and unemployment and career development theory. Youth unemployment has gone down over the last decade; indeed, for many youths not having a job is not a major issue. Once they turn 20 or 25, unemployment ceases to be a serious concern. However, for black youths, unemployment has remained exceedingly high. Even more startling is the large number of black youths neither in school nor in the labor market. And, many of these youths continue to be unemployed or outside the labor market into adulthood. Youth unemployment is a serious issue, Mangum

suggests, but it is a catastrophe only for some.

After noting that other developed countries are experiencing similar problems with youth but that they have little to offer the U.S. in terms of guidelines for public policy, Mangum returns to the theme of a bifurcated world of youth. The majority take part-time jobs for spending money, seek some post-secondary schooling, and in their early and mid-twenties become employed and self-supporting. Their's is a trial and error process, with occupational stabilization coming slowly through a developmental process. Employers recognize this gradual maturation and they shape their job offerings to it, offering transitory work to younger youths and more stable work to older youths. The haphazard nature of the process, the hit or miss quality is disturbing, but for most it is not catastrophic. For inner city ghetto youths, the "scarring" effects are disastrous; they can expect continued unemployment as adults and a damaged sense of self-worth that is personally and socially destructive.

Mangum's analysis is especially interesting in its dependence upon developmental theory, and his claim that there is a rough match between the developmental stage of adolescence and the ways in which employers treat youth. Mangum believes that young people are not ready to settle down and that much of their behavior can fairly simply be described as "behaving like kids." Employers recognize (and complain about) this. Where they are willing to hire adolescents at all, they restrict them to jobs "where the training requirements are minor, where turnover is not costly and often where the job itself is part-time or too unstable to be attractive to an adult who has any alternative" (p. 17). Mangum finds in his own research that employers overwhelmingly complain that the most serious problem in hiring youth is their propensity to quit, and such related behaviors as tardiness and absenteeism.

Mangum makes too little of this catch-22, perhaps the most fundamentally difficult to resolve, for a corrupt bargain has been struck that makes it almost

impossible to provide meaningful work for youth. Employers offer youth jobs predicated upon young people's lack of allegiance to work. Then employers complain when youths act in exactly the ways the employer and the job assume they will. Jobs for young people are thus structured to elicit exactly the kind of behavior nobody seems to want. The young are considered irresponsible and they are offered work that is exceedingly unlikely to enhance responsibility.

When Mangum asks, what do employers expect of youthful employees, one might assume -- on the basis of the kinds of jobs they offer -- that the answer would be that employers want limited skills, transiency, and low pay demands. Mangum seems to recognize this implicitly but that is not the kind of answer he wants to dwell on. Instead, he points to a curious dichotomy in employer expectations. When employers are asked what qualities they consider important in hiring, they note appearance and dress, language and speech, and references as very important. When asked what problems did they experience with youthful workers, employers complain most strongly about youths' unreliability in showing up for work and their proneness to quit. Mangum's response to this is that employers seem primarily to complain that "the major problem with kids is that they behave like kids" (p. 22), a comment that affirms Mangum's view that developmental processes largely shape how youths will behave. Employers, and by extension all adults, need to accept these lifestyle preferences of the young. In fact, Mangum implies, there is not much we can do. Most youths will work on the periphery in secondary labor markets "until they demonstrate work maturity through the aging process" (p. 26). The serious problem is not that kids behave like kids and thus consistently frustrate adult expectations, but rather that this youthful behavior is exaggerated among disadvantaged youths and is likely to persist into adulthood -- again reaffirming Mangum's distinction between a dilemma and a catastrophe.

Given that almost all youths act like kids and are thus not very good

employees in most employers' eyes, and that disadvantaged youths are more likely to carry that behavior to extremes and then continue it into adulthood, what is to be done? With this question, we can begin to see the full impact of Mangum's approach to the issues. Mangum takes the labor market as a more or less given, with employers in control of job hiring and firing. He emphasizes that "reality" and then focuses on the values that underlay youths' behavior. His gaze especially centers on how youths develop career and work-related values. Because of that, he winds up seeking fairly limited and, I suspect, marginal efforts at reshaping the value structure of the young.

Mangum turns explicitly to career development theories to show that there already exists some knowledge about how career values evolve. His stress on developmental stages has a number of important consequences, not the least that it shifts discussion about the transition to the world of work away from the labor market to youths themselves. The emphasis is less on the availability and nature of youth jobs, or the effects of poverty on family life, or the extent of racial and gender discrimination, or on how certification requirements shape job opportunities, and more on how youths develop values.

Mangum stresses the importance of the early childhood years in shaping attitudes toward work, basic skills, role stereotyping, and career choice. Unfortunately, he believes, "there are so few ways to influence the home during the preschool years" (p. 39) that public policy in a practical sense must start with the elementary school -- a somewhat incredible view given the effects of poverty and adult unemployment on children and the large numbers of children in child care and outside the home. Once at the school level, Mangum moves to a fairly standard brief for career education and the development of sound work values and positive attitudes toward work. The package includes career awareness in the elementary schools, career exploration in the middle and junior high schools, and preparation for the next steps in high school, with career education

integrated into every subject, with academic skills emphasized as part of all career preparation, and with collaboration between schools and business.

At this point, Mangum once again returns to his theme of a bifurcated transition under the section he calls "Ingredients for Success." Successful youths proceed through informal work experiences (neighborhood chores, baby sitting, paper routes), part-time jobs, juggling work and school, moving from job to job, and then choosing and settling down to an occupation without making an irrevocable commitment to a particular employer or a particular job. Much of this is done through informal contacts; most youths will have enough ability and education to do most jobs, and be personable enough to succeed. But again the story is different for many of the disadvantaged youth who are

> less likely, on the average, to have the same successful and encouraging work experience in childhood, and the same degree of successful working role models as their more advantaged peers. They are unlikely to have experienced the same quality of education. They do not have access to the same extent of employment opportunity at the labor market entrance. Dead end jobs appear more threatening to them because they perceive so many people around them trapped in such low status work. Persistent employment problems among large groups of youth of common socioeconomic and locational characteristics are prima facie evidence of some combination of lack of opportunity and lack of the prime qualifications of employability. Assisting them to the same results as the successful is the highest priority in the youth-to-adult transition. (p. 44)

At this point, Mangum is prepared to suggest policies to aid in making this transition successful. (He has already proposed career education, but has acknowledged that, as a formal movement, it failed to attract funding and adoption by teacher training institutions. He does not ask why, and instead in the latter section of his essay he seeks to resuscitate it in various guises.) But before he makes his proposals, he urges a recognition of "realities" -- that employers own jobs and determine whom to hire; that they want low-cost, productive, and non-disruptive workers; that youths' job successes come by adapting to employer requirements; that the discrepancy between skills and attitudes learned at home and the requirements of work is the widest it has ever

been; that work opportunities are bifurcating into minimal requirements and those jobs requiring greater credentialing and skills; that job security is decreasing; that most youths will successfully negotiate the transition but that others will be permanently scarred in the process; and that while the transition from adolescence to work maturity can be improved for all, the priorities should be on those currently experiencing the least success (pp. 45-46).

With this established, Mangum turns to a set of institutions that provide the settings for his proposals: the family, general education, vocational education, youth work experiences, proprietary schools, military training, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and second chance programs. The problem here is that at precisely the moment when Mangum should be bringing his analysis to a head, he has very little to say. It is not clear what he expects to happen. The proposals are neither precise nor creative. And, they are very downbeat.

Like other commentators, Mangum affirms that the family "is probably the single most important contributor or deterrent to preparation for the world of work. Yet, little is done to make the influence positive. To do so would be difficult and expensive and potentially coercive" (p. 46). The best that can be done is to help increase enthusiasm for work among parents and to educate them to provide positive attitudes to their children, largely it seems through parent education programs that emphasize career development. Unfortunately, at a time of stringent public resources, "it is unlikely that a widespread program of parental training in career development techniques will be undertaken" (p. 47). So much for taking the family or family policies seriously.

In terms of schooling, Mangum wants the formal education system to provide career education and to make sure that the schools teach basic skills sufficient to do the available jobs. Indeed, he argues, one of the reasons those who are successful in school are usually successful in the labor market is that "so much

of present-day employment is so much like the school environment" (p. 49). For those unsuccessful in school, alternatives like experience-based career education, career intern programs, and innovations like the Boston Compact's recent agreement with Boston firms to give priority in hiring to public school graduates, and the Philadelphia High School Academies' collaborative relationship to the business community, are examples of schooling that ease the transition to work. How much beyond these kinds of programs Mangum is willing to go is unclear. He expresses some reservations about making the labor market the primary focus of schooling, but his bias is certainly toward having the schools commit themselves significantly more toward "employability development" (p. 55).

As to vocational education per se, Mangum is critical of both its supporters and its critics, claiming that neither side understands the youth labor market. Critics of vocational training fail to recognize that at the secondary school level it is essentially career exploration and preparation for entry level jobs. Its concern is not with substantial occupational achievement and should not be evaluated on those grounds. Vocational education's defenders tend to oversell and thus wind up looking like failures when job placement and cost-benefit analyses are done. In the high school, vocational training should be limited to career exploration and dropout prevention, although for girls planning to enter clerical work, business education serves as job preparation. At the post-secondary level, vocational and technical programs can successfully provide skill training, but, in general, post-secondary schooling seems to serve "as an aging vat until some career decision is made, often by default" (p. 57). So much for the benefits of post-secondary education.

Mangum offers a cautious warning about the educational benefits of work experience programs, suggesting they can be useful if earning money does not replace educational and developmental goals. If students can avoid fly-by-night proprietary schools, they may be able to get some good training, although at a

price. The military offers the advantages of an aging vat, a controlled and disciplined environment, and, if care is taken, specialized training. For a variety of reasons, apprenticeship does not look like a good bet for most youths. About the most common form of work skill development, on-the-job training, not much is known, but since it occurs when youths are already on the job, Mangum suggests it is hard to see it as playing a major role in the transition to work.

Finally, Mangum looks at second chance programs -- the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1963, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1974, and the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982. These have been moderately successful for adults, more mixed for youth. On the whole, Mangum is favorably inclined toward employment and training programs, especially those that provide some direct financial assistance to enrolles and include on-the-job training. The larger point -- and he is absolutely right about this -- is that second chance programs have to be genuine alternatives to the institutions youth have left. Some subsistence grants have to be provided to attract and hold the poor, the curriculum needs to include job-getting, job-keeping, and job-doing skills, and the programs need to be tailored to particular groups of youth and well-monitored. Mangum concludes his assessment of second chance programs by asserting that employment and income through enhanced motivation and relevant programming should be their goals.

In the end, however, Mangum once again reminds us that "most American youth do not do badly in the adolescence to world of work transition" (p. 68). Many youths are indeed troubled, but for those from advantaged backgrounds, the troubles are not caused by labor market access. In terms of the transition to work, this means that scarce resources need to be focused on those most in need: recent immigrants, displaced workers, female-headed families, central city families, people who live in areas that can be reasonably be considered under-

developed societies. The problem in these areas have to be seen in intergenerational terms. That is, Mangum believes they cannot be attacked directly. He thus emphasizes parent education programs to train parents to make more positive contributions to career awareness, exploration, preparation, and access, although he acknowledges that the families which most need this training are the least likely to seek it. Greater attention to career development and labor market requirements in the schools would help the transition to work, as would innovative vocational and alternative schooling, post-secondary occupational programs with stipends, and various training programs that would guarantee hiring and promotion preferences. These ought to be widely available, but with resources scarce that is not likely to occur. Thus, it is necessary to "concentrate on that relatively small number who are being permanently scarred by their childhood and adolescent labor-related experiences and have little to look forward to as adults" (p. 72).

On this note, Mangum is not optimistic. He concludes: "It is not the knowledge nor the resources which is lacking but the commitment and the organizational skill" (p. 72).

Where does Mangum's analysis leave us? There is a lot that one can say positively about it. For one, by taking developmental processes seriously, Mangum recognizes that adolescents are active participants in their own lives. They behave, a fact too often neglected, when public policies are developed to solve youths' problems. Young people are not simply agents of the economic and social system. For a second, Mangum is right in making clear that however concerned we are about all youth, the conditions of economically poor youths amount to a national tragedy. For another, he acknowledges that the effects of families, schools, and the workplace upon the young are interdependent.

And yet, instead of making these insights the basis for an active approach to youth, Mangum is curiously passive. He may be right, but it leaves us with

only the most marginal of responses.

His passivity toward the job market is extraordinary: "The employer, not the employee nor the public policy determines who is and who is not employable" (p. 20). He treats with a kind of inevitability the developmental stage of adolescence ("kids will behave like kids") and the ways employers create jobs that provide the incentive for kids to behave irresponsibly. He says nothing about recent findings that the large number of young people with part-time jobs may not be benefitting from them and may even be suffering. There is nothing about racial and gender discrimination, nothing about such suggestions as reducing the minimum wage for youth -- not a good idea, but worth acknowledging. And, his major recommendation is still another go around on career education in the schools, a palliative that seems unlikely to mean very much to anyone, least of all the very disadvantaged he is so concerned about.

This is a paper that implies that there are not likely to be many meaningful roles for youth, other than more or less "behaving like kids." There does not seem to be much here on how to maximize youths' participation in society. There is a plea -- an important one, I might add -- for greater recognition of how young people learn values, but it is divorced form the actual conditions of families, schools, and youth jobs.

Mangum has taken the easy way out. Admittedly, we lack certitudes about the current and future transition to work. But we do not lack questions worth pursuing. What are the likely effects of the new academic reforms on young people? How are these affecting vocational training programs? Are the reforms likely to lead to more dropouts? Will we see greater efforts at remediation, somewhat like the current efforts being directed at student athletes? Are postsecondary programs becoming overwhelmingly vocational training tied to specific employers and jobs? With what effects? Are there kinds of work that youths will find meaningful? Do serious attempts at neighborhood renewal or

supervised child care engage young people? What kind of work-based welfare programs are likely to improve the lives of the disadvantaged -- no small question at a time of agitation to revise welfare and when teenage motherhood is a national concern. What would an intergenerational compact around work look like? Should we be benign about young people's experimentation when they seem so vulnerable to alcohol, drugs, and despondency?

I do not have answers to these questions. I am not sure anyone does. But I think they need to be addressed more forthrightly than Mangum does. There is much to learn from "Youth Transition from Adolescence to the World of Work." But there is too much that is missing.

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A COMMENTARY

on Garth L. Mangum's

## YOUTH TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO THE WORLD OF WORK

**Stephen F. Hamilton**

Mangum has written an exceptionally well-informed overview of the youth labor market, career development and education, and the range of programs intended to help youth enter employment, which is no surprise in view of his central contributions to those domains. Comparing his What Works Best for Whom? (Mangum & Walsh, 1978) with the National Academy of Science's review of Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act evaluations (Betsey, et al., 1985) suggests that what we learned from YEDPA's "knowledge development" effort was what Mangum already knew. That proof of his prescience should be fair warning to anyone trying to improve upon his current assessment and proposals.

Mangum's two most important themes, in my view, are: 1) that serious disruption in the transition to work is most problematic for a small minority of youth, namely disadvantaged youth in central cities; and 2) that largely unrecognized labor market dynamics account for many transition problems. My critical comments are offered as elaborations on these two themes. I shall also raise questions about some of his proposals in the hope of more effectively achieving the goals he has stated. Because Mangum has explained and supported his views so well, I will not restate all those points I agree with but will focus instead on a few points of disagreement.

### The Irresponsibility of Youth

If young people demonstrate higher levels of instability and irresponsibility in the labor market than adults, can we conclude that this behavior is an inevitable consequence of their stage of development? Mangum gives some good

reasons for answering this question affirmatively. It is surely natural and right that youth should be "in an exploratory mood." By definition, most lack the family obligations that make job-switching risky for many older people. Furthermore, they need to "find themselves," to establish an identity, and this intra-psychic journey demands movement, trial and error, commitment testing.

But the formulation of parallelism between youthful irresponsibility and the youth labor market breaks down if the labor market can be shown to make youth irresponsible. Rather than operating in parallel, the youth labor market exacerbates some of the negative features of youthfulness. This interpretation can be substantiated by three comparisons: cross-national, historical, and across socio-economic classes.

**West German Youth**

My favorite cross-national comparison is with the Federal Republic of Germany, where a highly developed system of apprenticeship, combined with vocational schooling, moves about half of the youth cohort into skilled primary labor market jobs around age 18, the same age when U.S. youth graduate from high school and, if they do not continue their schooling, begin three to six years of "floundering" in the secondary labor market. (See Hamilton, 1987.) It is true, as Mangum points out, that apprenticeship has declined in most European countries and that their youths' transitions to work now look more like ours: including extended schooling and a period of tenuous attachment to the labor market. But an inductive generalization can be disproved by only one exception, and the productive and pacific employment of millions of skilled teenagers in the West German labor market disproves the claim that unstable, irresponsible labor market behavior is inherent in youth. (Although I am not directly acquainted with them, I have been told that similar "dual systems" of apprenticeship and vocational

schooling exist in East Germany, Austria, and the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland, and that the remnants of such a system persist in Alsace!)

Comparing statistics on problem behavior among U.S. and West German youth also challenges the claim that irresponsibility is an inevitable concomitant of youthfulness. The statistics are compelling evidence that youth is a more trying time in the United States than it needs to be. White teenagers in the U.S. have a fertility rate twice that in West Germany; the rate for U.S. blacks is five times as high. Both regular and occasional drug use is on the order of five times greater among U.S. than West German teenagers. Even alcohol use, which is more highly condoned culturally and legal in Germany, is at least as common among U.S. teenagers and abstinence is less common here. (German sixteen year-olds are permitted to buy beer, and children may legally be served when accompanied by an adult. Eighteen is the age of majority, when all prohibitions cease.) In both countries, youth commit a disproportionate share of crimes, but juveniles commit 23 percent of all crimes in the U.S. compared to 13 percent in West Germany. Under eighteen year-olds are involved in 1.5 criminal cases per 1000 in the 14-17 population in West Germany. In the U.S., the comparable figure is 43.2 per 1000, and the population base includes ages 10-17. Because of higher numbers of automobile accidents and homicides, a white U.S. male is 50 percent and a white female 33 percent more likely to die a violent death than their West German counterparts (Hamilton, in press). Other modern industrial countries have rates of youth problem behavior that are much more like West Germany's than ours. We are obviously doing something wrong.

**Youth in History**

Written records of elders bemoaning youths' manners and morals are as old as writing itself, supporting the belief that internal, psychological as well as

external, sociological dynamics tend to make young people less "responsible" than older people. (There are also exceptions. The first generation of Victorians in Britain chastised their elders for being frivolous and immoral.) If internal, psychological dynamics were sufficient to explain youths' labor market behavior in the contemporary United States, then we would not expect to see substantial differences in that behavior over time. Yet we know that the whole idea of a youth labor market, indeed, the concept of adolescence as a universal stage of life, is of relatively recent origins. It is not youth who have changed but the society in which they are embedded. One hundred years ago, when high school was a bastion of privilege preparing a tiny elite for college and the learned professions, youth simply stopped going to school and went to work. There were youth jobs, such as newspaper boy, bootblack, and bobbin boy, but most jobs were agricultural and depended more on muscle than on either age or education.

One of the interesting points Joseph Kett made in his history of adolescence (1977) was that full-time employment was most closely associated with independence during the century between 1820 and 1920, when industrialization created plentiful opportunities for young (male) workers regardless of formal education. Before and since, youth has been a time of "semi-dependence," during which expectations for responsible behavior are mixed with adult-imposed strictures. Previously, and to some extent through the nineteenth century, it was common for a boy to work on a neighbor's farm well into his twenties, and turn over his wages to his father as repayment for his childhood board and room. Marriage had to be postponed until this obligation was discharged.

When the labor market had less need for young unskilled workers, child labor laws, compulsory school attendance, and escalating credential requirements effectively shut most youth out of attractive jobs. To conclude from the fact

that youth do not demonstrate strong commitment to the unattractive jobs they are allowed to take that they are inherently irresponsible is not only "blaming the victim" but assuming that no changes in social institutions could change young people's behavior. I believe youth's labor market behavior is less responsible today than it was in the past precisely because the opportunities they have available call for and reward responsibility less. (Note that I am assuming without proving that youths' irresponsible labor market behavior is worse today than in the past. The main evidence supporting that assumption is the prominence of publicly expressed concern. It is my impression that in earlier eras irresponsible labor market behavior was attributed -- correctly or not -- to classes of people defined by criteria other than age, most often race or ethnicity.)

**Responsible Behavior and Social Class**

Mangum's well-placed emphasis on the special transition problems of disadvantaged youth can be heightened by comparing those youth with the quarter of the youth population who use higher education as their path to adult employment. College graduates typically enter careers by taking primary labor market positions immediately upon graduation or after post-graduate professional training. College has two functions for them. It is an "aging vat," giving them socially acceptable roles and responsibilities until they are deemed old enough to do serious work. And it increases their "human capital," perhaps by inculcating genuinely useful knowledge, skills, and attitudes, but certainly at least by signalling to employers some capacity to behave responsibly.

If irresponsibility is inherent in youth, then college students should be as irresponsible as their age-mates in the full-time labor market. Anyone working on a college campus could make this argument. In fact, college campuses can be

seen as institutions designed to allow youth to be irresponsible without doing irreparable harm to themselves or others. Residential colleges, at any rate, have many of the characteristics Goffman ascribed to "total institutions." But the other perspective, the one employers take when they reward college graduates with better jobs, is that successful college students have demonstrated responsibility. They must get out of bed in the morning, attend class, follow instructions, study without being told to do so by their parents, and focus themselves sufficiently to produce examinations, laboratory assignments, and term papers of acceptable quality. Even if the learning they do in college is only marginally related to an occupation, they must demonstrate ability to learn. If they are irresponsible in the sense of not doing what is expected of them or of not attending to their own best interests, then they will probably not graduate.

Colleges may, of course, be more effective at identifying those youth who are already responsible in these ways than they are at teaching responsibility. Nevertheless, any claim that youth are inherently irresponsible by virtue of their youthfulness must account for the behavior of college students as well as young workers.

**Economic and Social Structural Influences**

Although Mangum sensitively avoids claiming that unemployment results solely from unemployed people's personal deficiencies, he does not grapple with the disquieting possibility that an underclass is an inevitable, even necessary element in a capitalist economy. Moreover, it is possible to read his paper as a plea for making everyone above average. He points out that there is a growing "bifurcation" between professional and technical jobs requiring high levels of education and low-level jobs requiring none. He even tells us that one-third of

present jobs fall into the latter category and that another third can be learned from experience and on-the-job training. Yet he blames youthful irresponsibility for transition problems and prescribes more and better schooling as the remedy for inequality.

A less sanguine view is that high levels of unemployment are a natural consequence of employers' investment in capital to displace highly-paid labor and that, furthermore, maintaining a substantial pool of unemployed people is the best way of limiting wage costs for the apparently expanding set of lower-level jobs. If this view has any merit, then making youth more responsible or raising the educational achievement levels of the disadvantaged will have no impact at all on the distribution of unemployment; it will only mean that the unemployed are better qualified. Programs like the Job Corps that succeed in helping some disadvantaged youth acquire better jobs do so, by this interpretation, simply by rearranging the "queue," the line of people waiting to be hired. For every disadvantaged youth counted as a positive placement, there is another who would have done as well but was displaced by the program participant.

There is some truth in the human capital theory that employers will invest more and the economy will be more productive when workers are better educated, and I strongly agree with Mangum that education should be improved for reasons that do not depend upon employment, especially for those most disadvantaged, but I fear that the content and allocation of jobs influence the social structure more than education. Indeed, I believe a major explanation for the failure of many youth to perform well in school is that they see no connection between doing well in school and success in the labor market. They do not believe that getting a good education will assure them a good job. And they have good reasons for their skepticism. Ogbu (1974) found that black and Hispanic youth exerted

themselves neither on school work nor on standardized tests because their parents had given them an inadvertent double message. Along with repeating to them that they must work hard in school to make a better life, Ogbu heard parents telling their children about incidents in which discrimination frustrated the efforts of minority people. Although the parents did not intend that they do so, the young people took the second message as a contradiction of the first.

Willis (1977) described interactions among working class British youth and their parents. Members of the rebellious male clique he studied were in constant conflict in their school. Their parents, instead of being upset, accepted the rebellion as legitimate and, like their sons, saw school as irrelevant to the life of a manual laborer that they led and fully expected their sons would lead.

If there are jobs to be done that require little learning or responsibility, and if those jobs are allocated to those with the least education, what impact will it have on unemployment to raise the educational levels of those at the bottom of the hierarchy? Is it not more plausible to argue that disadvantaged people will have more incentive to take advantage of educational opportunities when they have reason to believe that the work they are allowed to do will make use of their educational attainments?

The Boston Compact and some of the other programs Mangum mentions address some of these questions, but they cannot be answered fully by programs. They imply a need for considering fundamental changes in the social structure, including the structure of work. Even in the absence of any final answers, proposals for change should be evaluated according to whether they are adequate to deal with the problems they are expected to alleviate. I find it noteworthy that two scholars who have been most active in raising fundamental questions, Carnoy and Levin, have recently (1985) recommended that public schools and other

agents of the state continue to take the vanguard in movements toward greater equality because they are more subject to popular mandates than privately controlled workplaces. Thus Mangum's proposals should not be dismissed as merely palliative even by those holding a more radical political perspective than he assumed.

**Proposals for Improvement**

I have already raised the principal question about Mangum's proposals: whether they are adequate to address the root causes of the problems he has identified. Three narrower challenges follow as more specific forms of this question.

**Educating Parents as Career Educators**

Beyond a low-level effort, including informing parents about the realities of the youth labor market and the likelihood of transition difficulties (which would, I believe, also allay many parents' feelings of failure during their offsprings' youth), I see little future in a didactic effort of this type. Kohn (1977) demonstrated that parents expect from their children the kind of behavior they themselves are required to demonstrate in the workplace. This is why the kinds of parents Ogbu and Willis observed and interviewed did not effectively encourage their children to do well in school. Their own experience had taught them that being able to work hard manually was more important than mind work. Parents whose jobs demand compliance, teach their children to be compliant; those whose jobs demand independence, encourage independence in their children. Telling parents to teach their children things about the labor market that they do not know to be true or that contradict what they know to be true is unlikely to have happy results. Parents could use some more information to pass on to their children a more accurate picture of the labor market, but most of all they

need good jobs themselves.

**Work and Motivation**

There is an irony in the fact reiterated by Mangum, that effective alternative education programs for youth who do poorly in conventional schools have a strong orientation toward careers (Hamilton, 1986). When employers complain that youth are irresponsible and unstable, they are talking about the same kids whose attention can usually be attracted by relating school learning to genuine, attractive career possibilities in the future. To belabor my main point once again, if youth behave irresponsibly in the labor market because of their youthfulness, why are school programs that are tied to occupations more effective with some of the most irresponsible youth?

**What is Known and What Can Be Implemented**

It is difficult to quarrel with the general point made in Mangum's concluding section on "Concentration," that we already know how to do a much better job than we are doing. Even if some of the specific programs or approaches he lists were rejected, other tried and true approaches could be found to take their places. The question is whether more than "commitment and the organizational skill" are lacking or, if that is really all we need, why they are lacking.

The questions raised above about economic and social structural influences imply a different diagnosis. Perhaps the reason we have not done better is that powerful people benefit from current conditions and would lose something if those conditions were improved. Before rejecting that cynical explanation, we must carefully analyze just who gains and who loses as a result of the current situation and how that allocation of costs and benefits would change if any proposed changes were effected.

More concretely, and without departing from Mangum's implied political perspective, one must ask whether we know enough yet about how to inspire commitment and achieve levels of organizational skill sufficient to the task. The implementation of innovations is a daunting challenge. Before attempting to put these proposals into effect, it would be wise to learn as much as possible from accounts of that process.

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